Salt

January/February 2019

The Art & Soul of Wilmington

Legend of the Live Oak

Adventures on the Blockade Runner Banshee • The Literary Bed-and-Breakfast

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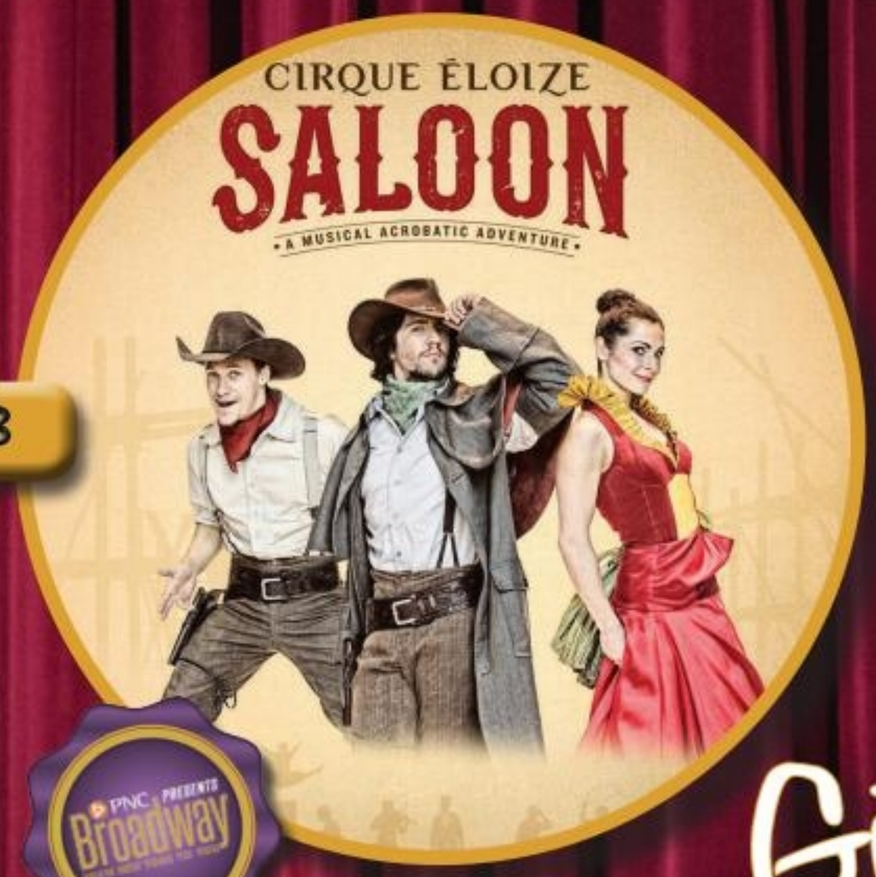
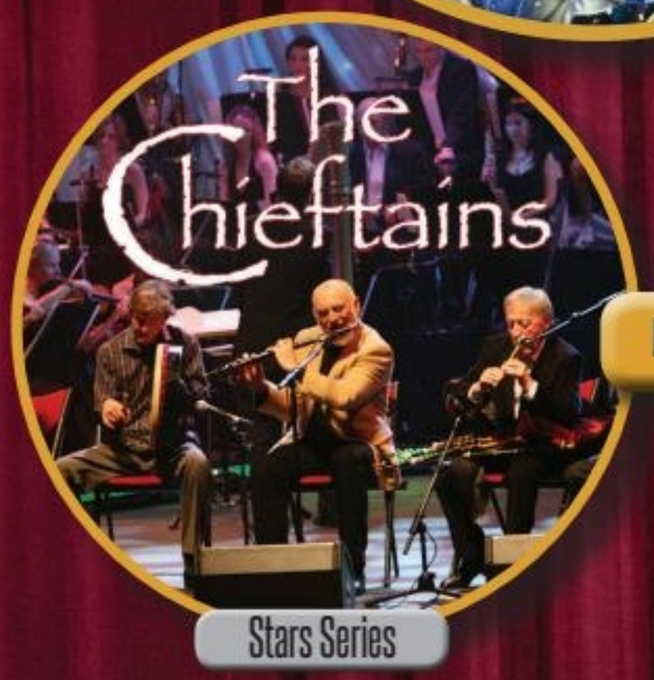


FEB. 8



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1608 Landfall Drive • Landfall • $1,695,000

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1938 S. Live Oak Parkway • South Oleander • $1,795,000

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809 Swift Wind Place • Landfall • $1,099,000

Located on a quiet Landfall cul-de-sac, this gently sloping private pie-shaped lot overlooks the marsh of Howe Creek. Custom built by Old South Building Company, this 6,150 square foot residence features a huge covered front porch with tabby oyster shell exterior and a large terrace in the back with an awning.

1909 Hallmark Lane • South Oleander • $500,000

Located just inside Landfall's Eastwood Gate, this low maintenance brick home features 4 bedrooms, 3 1/2 baths (including a first floor master suite with elegant bath and walk-in closet) plus a large bonus room/studio above the two car garage.

2508 N Lumina Ave 3a • Wrightsville Beach • $1,295,000

Sought after Sterling edition ocean front townhouse layout in Wrightsville Dunes Condominium. This four bedrooom, 3 bath unit is top two floors on the north corner with private ocean front and sound view balconies. Enjoy the north end of Wrightsville Beach with miles of clear blue water and sugar white sandy beach.

6201 N Bradley Overlook • Parsley Woods • $500,000

Stunning all brick home at the sought after Parsley Woods community which is only 5 minutes from Wrightsville Beach and offers water access on Bradley Creek, community pool, Tennis/Pickelball courts, clubhouse, and dock/gazebo with easy launch for kayaks, canoes, and paddle boards.

705 Planters Row • Landfall • $1,395,000

This spectacular Mediterranean design is tucked discretely down a winding driveway planted with lush landscaping on over one acre of private gardens and fenced rear yard.

1140 Turnberry Lane • Landfall • $1,166,000

Looking for flair with a touch of sophistication? Set back on over an acre of property, this brick home sits high overlooking Landfall Lake and provides three stories of comfortable living.

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1603 Airlie Forest Court • Airlie Forest • $649,000

Sought-after "in the bubble" location this brick and stone residence features an open floor plan with huge chef's kitchen, 2 story family room with wall of windows and fireplace and first floor master suite with adjacent study. Upstairs are 3 bedrooms 2 baths.

137 Hallbrook Farms Circle • Porters Neck Plantation • $586,000

Located on a beautifully landscaped wooded lot overlooking the Porter's Neck Tom Fazio designed championship golf course (#5), this four bedroom, 4 1/2 bath home features three bedrooms on the first floor including a spacious master suite with his and her walk-in closets.

354 Crown Point Drive • Hampstead • $375,000

Beautiful home built by Cross Roads Construction on large .46-acre lot with no rear neighbor. Loaded with quality features including LVP and tile floors, vaulted living room ceiling, granite kitchen counters, SS appliances, gas range, gas fire place, screened back porch, backyard fire pit with patio and side load garage.

805 Gull Point Road • Landfall • $859,000

Located in the quiet cul-de-sac of one of Landfall's prettiest streets, Gull Point Road, this true post and beam home is tucked down a tree-lined winding driveway and borders the scenic tidal Howe Creek.

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Bradley Creek Point | Sold Price: $5,000,000

272 BEACH ROAD NORTH

Figure Eight Island | Sold Price: $2,500,000

6 BEACH ROAD SOUTH

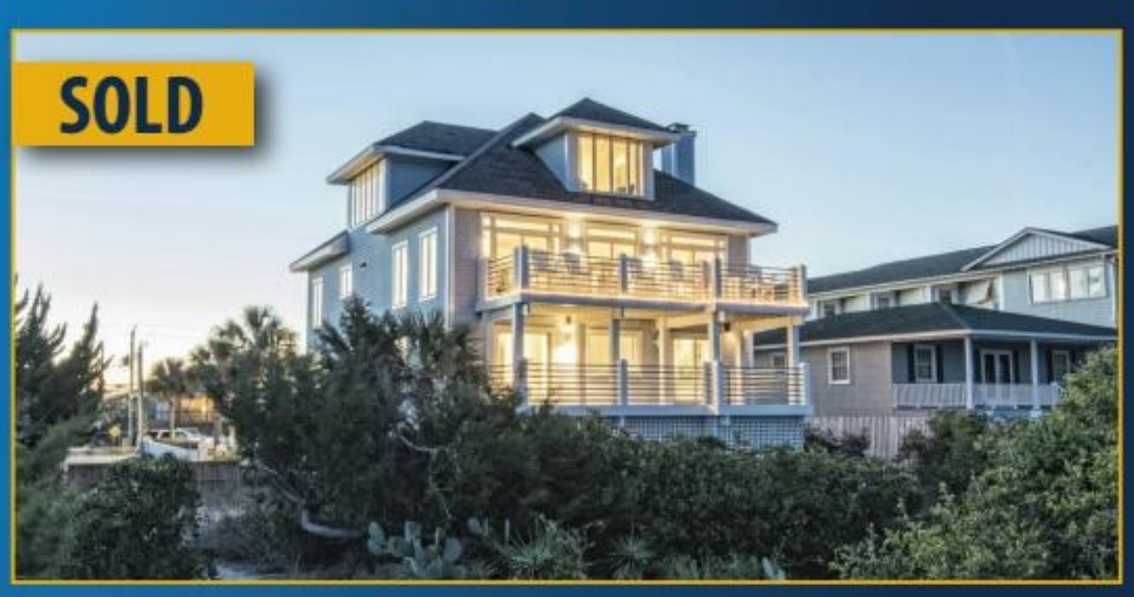
Figure Eight Island | Sold Price: $4,450,000

33 WEST HENDERSON STREET

Wrightsville Beach | Sold Price: $2,750,000

2601 GRAY GABLES LANE

Gray Gables | Sold Price: $1,525,000



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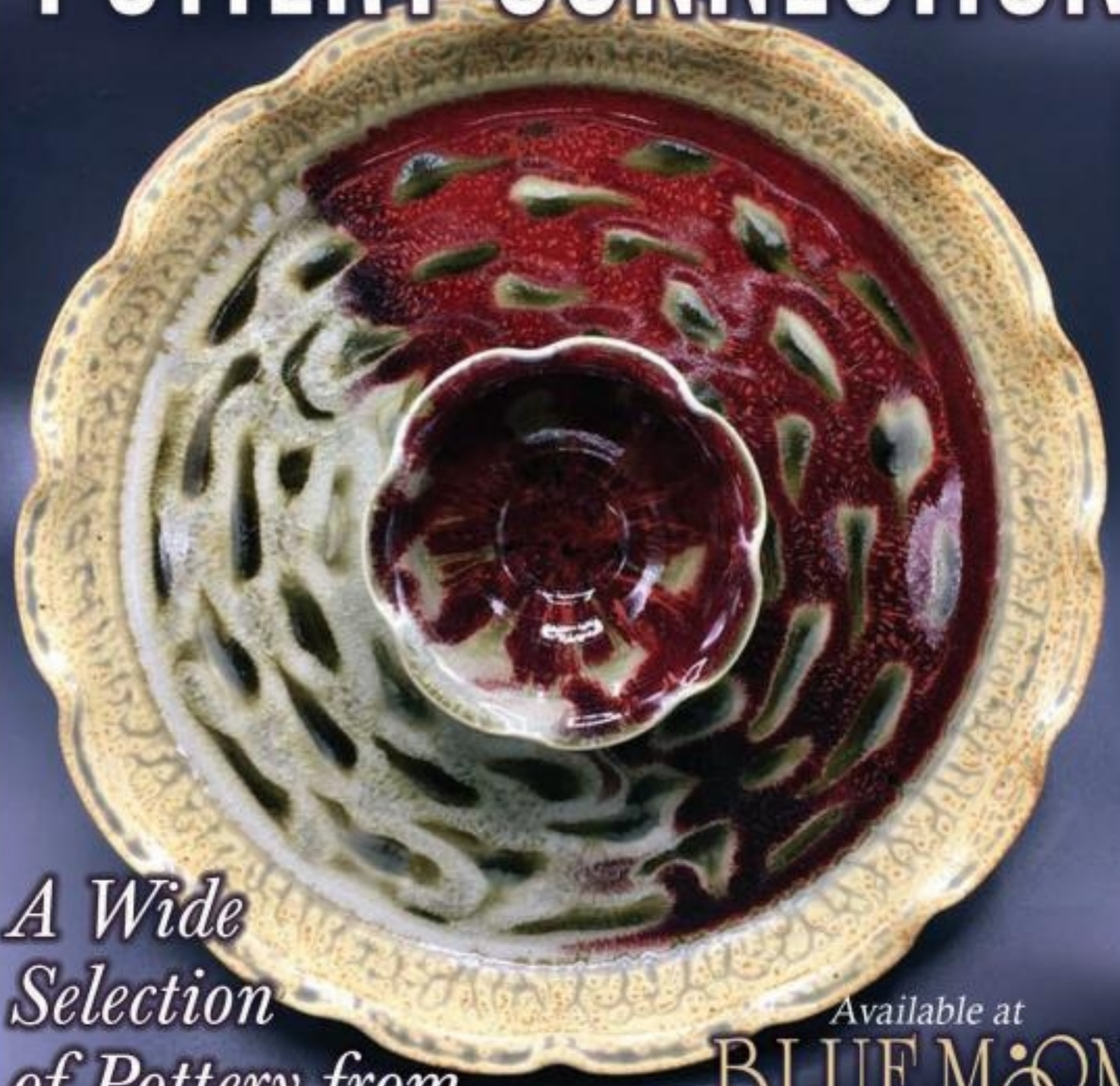

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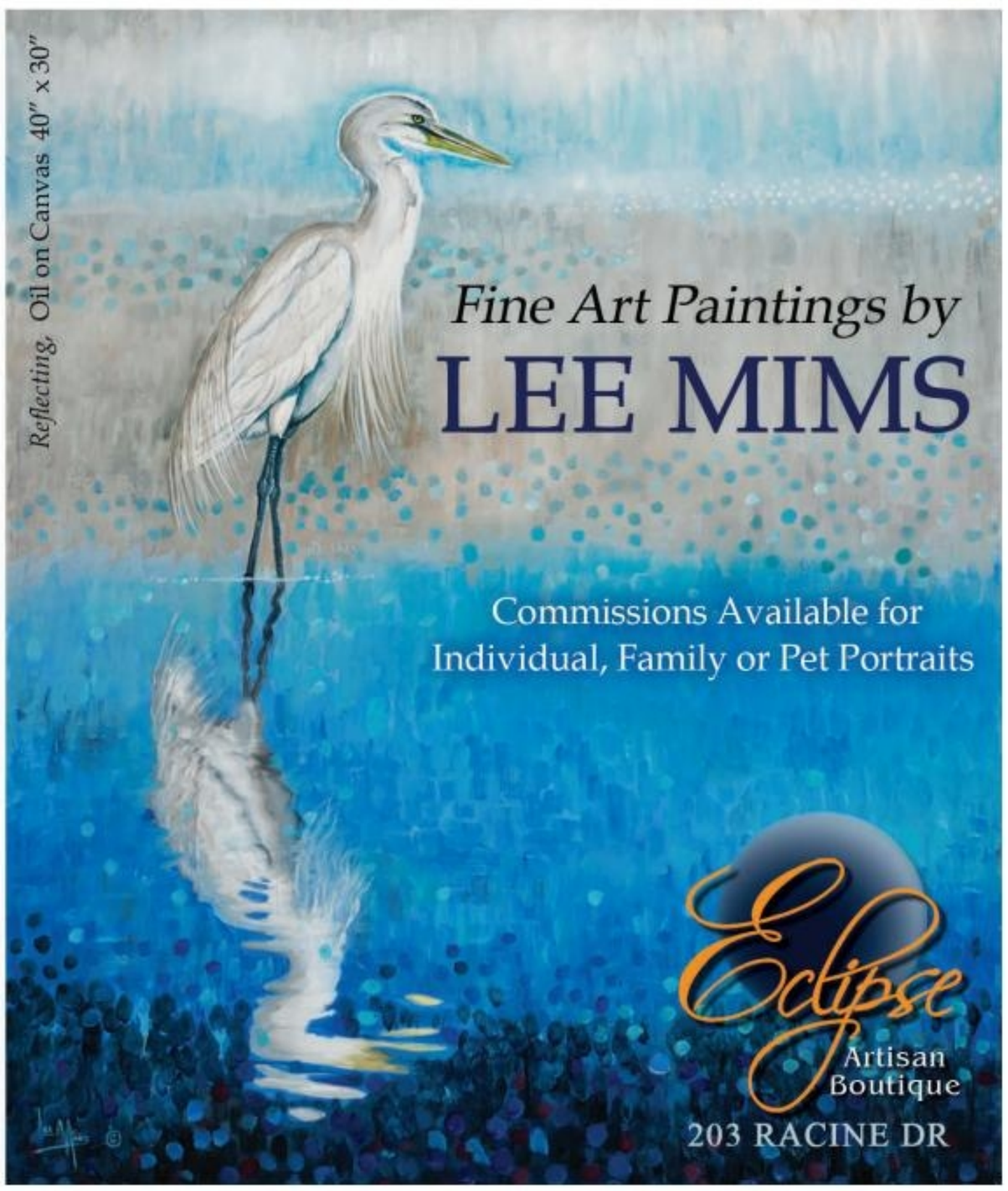
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VOLUME 7, NO. 1

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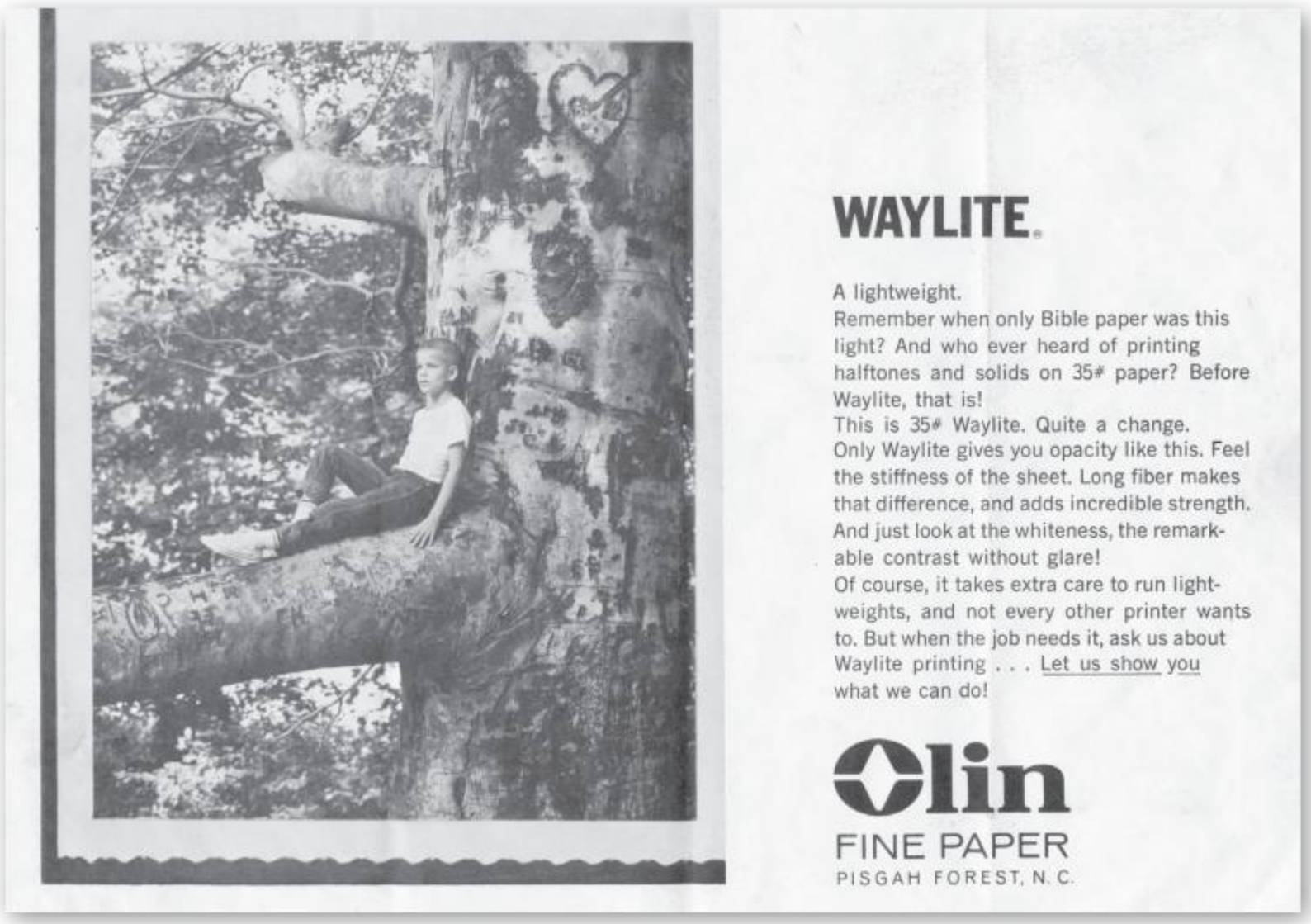
Kid Up a Tree

Because of a father who loved the Old North State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FINE PAPER
PISGAH FOREST, N.C.

By Jim Dodson

Half a century ago, my dad was on a creative team from a High Point – based ad agency that produced perhaps the state of North Carolina's most iconic travel and tourism campaign.

It declared the Old North State to be "Variety Vacationland" and featured beauty shots of our blessed land from the Outer Banks to the Blue Ridge Mountains, along with a catchy theme song that sounded like a college fight song sung by the Fred Waring Singers.

It was called the "North Carolina Vacation Song."

North Car-o-lina, friendly mountain breezes,
North Car-o-lina, with its sandy beaches,
Wonderland of Variety . . .
Coast to mountains it's great to be
Right here in North Car-o-lina
Love the pines around in North Car-o-lina,
Get your cares behind you
Livin' is right in ho-li-day bright
NORTH CARO-O-LINA!

If you've reached a certain threshold of age, you probably know this classic and clever jingle word for word. In fact, you probably can't get the dang thing out of your head six decades later. It's stuck in there playing on an endless loop with Speedy Alka-Seltzer ("Plop, plop, fizz, fizz, Oh what a relief it is . . .") and Mighty Mouse pitching Colgate toothpaste as he battles Mr. Tooth Decay.

My old man couldn't carry a tune in a bucket, but he was a whiz at writing witty light verse, clever limericks and jingles in the style of Ogden Nash, the poet laureate of Light Verse, one of his literary heroes, the author of such timeless gems as:

My garden will never make me famous,
I'm a horticultural ignoramus,
I can't tell a string bean from a soybean,
Or even a girl bean from a boy bean.

Or for you First Amendment Fans:

Senator Smoot is an institute
Not to be bribed with pelf;
He guards our homes from erotic tomes
By reading them all himself.

And lastly, a reassuring post-holiday ditty for those anxious about the post-nuclear age in which we reside:

At Christmas in olden times,
The sky was full of happy chimes.
But now the skies above us whistle,
With supersonic guided missiles.
This Christmas I'll be modern, so
Here comes my guided mistletoe.

I suspect my clever papa had something to do with the lyrics of North Carolina's wickedly infectious "Vacation Song" because he wrote lots of other memorable copy and commercials — print and television — that prompted large agencies in Chicago and Atlanta to try to lure him their way.

He always politely listened to their pitches, but in the end stayed at home, his home, in North Carolina. Some of his favorite subjects, in fact, were rural counties he promoted with spots that illustrated their timeless qualities of life. My brother and I both wound up being models for a couple of these promotions. Brother Richard, circa 1964, is shown bird hunting with his "father" in a harvested cornfield on a beautiful autumn afternoon, revealing the rustic charms of Stanly County.

Yours truly, roundabout age 10, wearing jeans, sneakers and a buzz worthy of a Parris Island recruit, is shown sitting on a large tree limb staring dreamily off into the firmament over the green hills of Old Catawba, an ad for Olin Paper Company that found its way into several national magazines. I worked cheap; the sneakers were brand new, though I'm still waiting for my residuals.

Most of all, our ditty-loving daddy, a product of the Great Depression who never finished college but went off to war and steeped himself in poetry and literature and history for the rest of his days, believed that effective advertising had to be both honest and true, which are not always the same thing. He worked on Terry Sanford's gubernatorial campaign, for example, largely because of Sanford's strong commitment to higher education, but turned down several other politicians he sensed were "too smooth to be believable," as he liked to say.

I spent much of this past year thinking about (and sorely missing) my old man's infectious good humor and belief in the power of humility, honest words and decent language — something that seems quaintly out of fashion in the time of a President who tweets insults on the hour, grades himself superior to Abe Lincoln and seems to have only a passing acquaintance with the truth.

As a new and hopeful year dawns, and I wish my dad were still around to pick me up with one of his funny verses about the worrisome state of affairs, perhaps his muse Ogden Nash will have to suffice:

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The American people,
With grins jocose,
Always survive the fatal dose.
And though our systems are slightly wobbly,
We'll fool the doctor this time, probly.

But wait — stop the presses!

On an even brighter note, my daughter Maggie, who turns 30 this month and actually works as a senior copywriter for one of those large ad agencies that tried to lure her grandfather to the big city half a century ago, just sent her old man the pick-me-up he needed — three clever video spots she wrote for, of all things, Keebler Crackers.

Her "other" life is writing beautiful short stories, screenplays and a witty newsletter for her Book Drunk Book Club. But as her cracker videos clearly prove, genius skips a generation.

Judge for yourself.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jupoZctbUJs

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8w_gQsiXevA

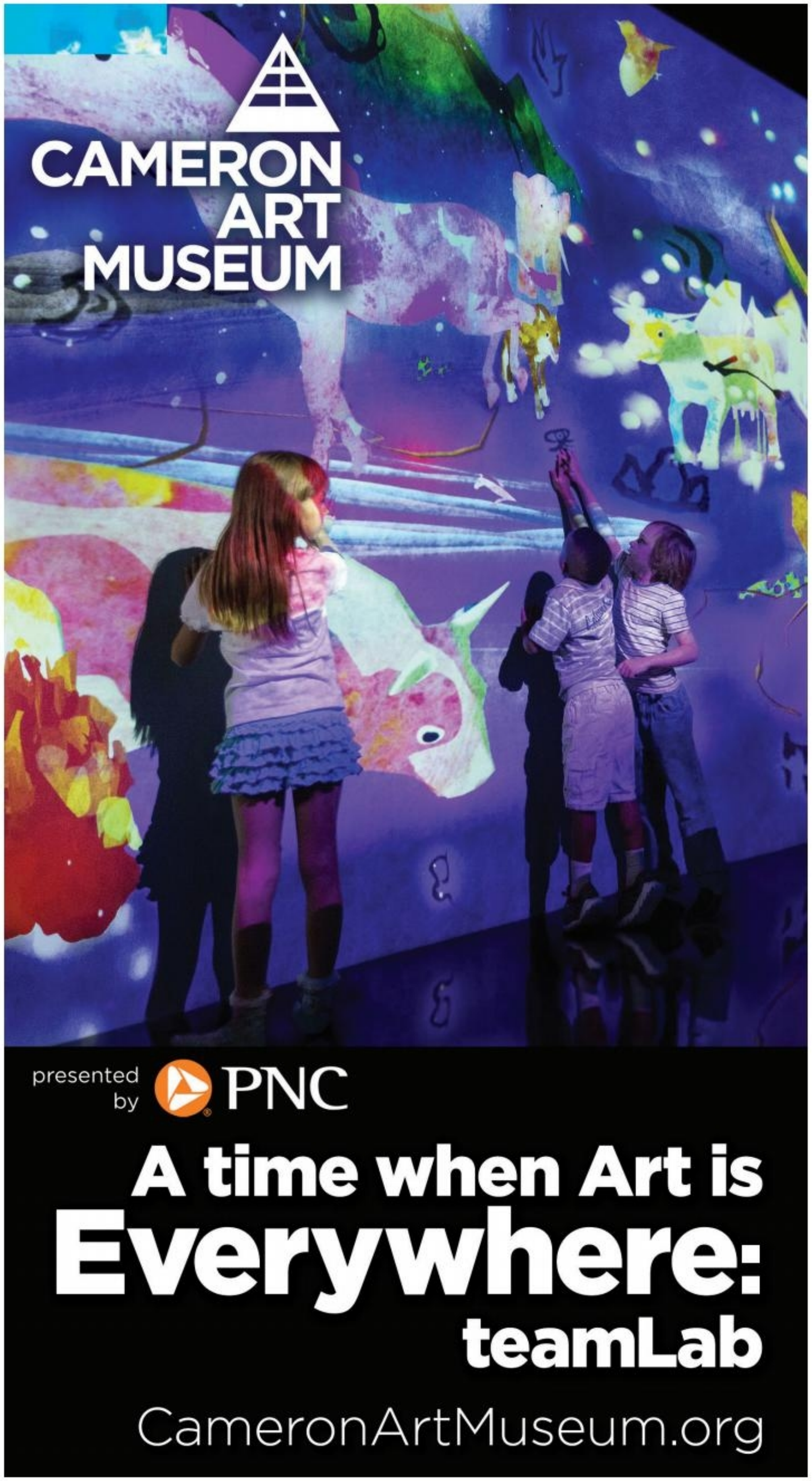
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CUs2437pRS4

Somewhere off in the firmament over the state he dearly loved, I'm guessing my old man might be grinning. Maybe his friend Ogden Nash is, too.

In any case, so you'll never get it out of your head, I shall leave you with the rest of the famous vacation song. You can Google it, too.

North Car-o-lina, would you like to roll along scenic highways?
Let your travels bring you,
Face to face with history,
For new excitement . . . you'll agree!
It's all in North Car-o-lina
Bigger land of pleasure,
Life can be fine-er,
You'll discover treasure
Where the moon shines through tall green pines in . . .
NORTH-CAR-O-LINA!

Contact Editor Jim Dodson at jim@thepilot.com.

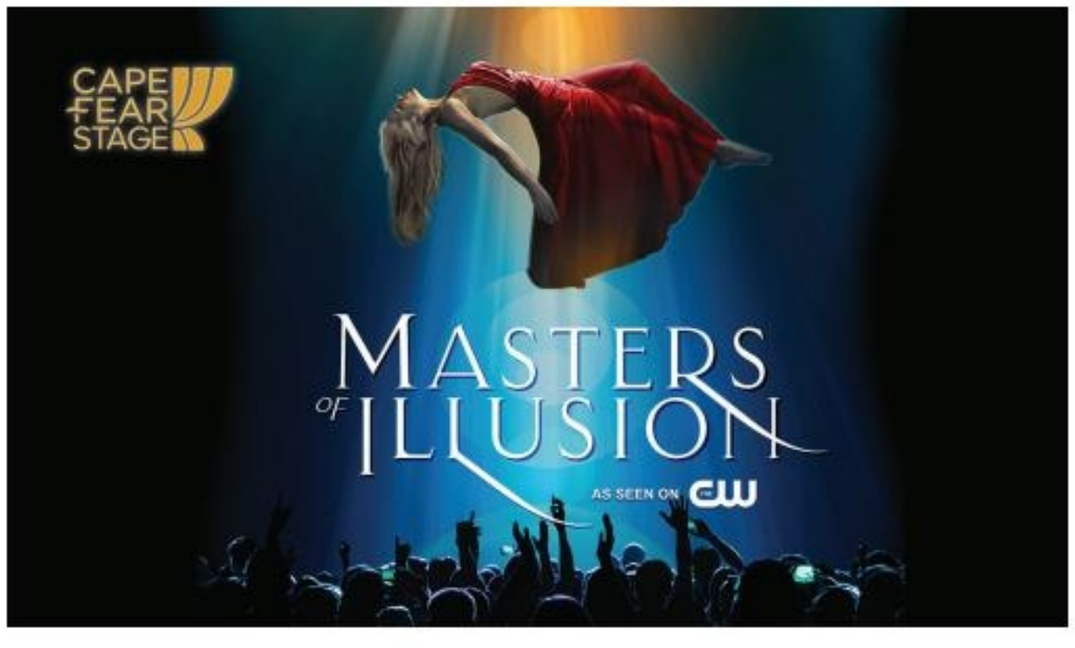


For the Birds

Winter birders, take note: Halyburton Park will be offering a Lake Mattamuskeet and Outer Banks birding trip this weekend, featuring waterfowl and shorebirds of Eastern North Carolina. The group will make visits to Lake Mattamuskeet National Wildlife refuge, Alligator River, Pea Island, Bodie Island, Oregon Inlet and Pocosin Lakes. Register by January 5; ages 16 and older. Admission: $120. Jan. 11-13. Halyburton Park, 4099 S. 17th Street, Wilmington. For info: (910) 341-0075 or info@halyburtonpark.com.

Could It Be Magic?

The Wilson Center stage will be the setting for *Masters of Illusion –Live!* an evening of some of the world's foremost magicians, experts in the arts of illusion and deception. Among those featured: Tommy Wind, who combines illusion with rock and roll music; Farrell Dillon, a popular comedy musician who has toured in 30 countries; and Greg Gleason, the star of "The Wizard's Secrets" in Las Vegas, where he has performed more than 9,000 shows. All three have appeared on the hit TV series *Masters of Illusion*. Tickets: $25-$69. Jan. 14, 7:30 p.m. Wilson Center, 703 N. Third St., Wilmington. For info: (910) 362-7999 or cfcc.edu.



Flower Power

Camellia exhibitors from throughout the Southeast will display nearly 1,000 award-winning blooms at the Tidewater Camellia Club's 69th annual Winter Show & Sale. There will be a camellia contest with judges from the American Camellia Society, educational displays on cultivating camellias, as well as an expanded sale of award-winning blooms. Admission: Free for spectators. Feb. 23, 10 a.m. New Hanover County Arboretum, 6202 Oleander Drive, Wilmington. For registration and other information: tidewatercamelliaclub.org.

The Fall of Fort Fisher

Fort Fisher was the jewel in the crown — the last Confederate seaport to be seized by the Union in the Civil War. In remembrance of the events, the Friends of Fort Fisher will host a one-day history event marking the 154th anniversary of the Battle of Fort Fisher. There will be Union and Confederate re-enactors, as well as tours, activities and cannon firing. Photographer Henry Taylor, who specializes in 19th century wet-plate photography, will be on-hand to take pictures. Admission: Free. Jan. 12, 10 a.m. Fort Fisher State Historic Site, 1610 Fort Fisher Blvd., Kure Beach. For info: (910) 251-7340.

Jenny Scheinman's *Kannapolis: A Moving Portrait*

Acclaimed violinist, singer and composer Jenny Scheinman takes us back in time with a multimedia show that combines the images of Depression-era filmmaker H. Lee Waters interspersed with bluegrass, country and folk songs. Originally from northern California, Scheinman has worked with countless musicians as a performer and arranger, among them Ani de Franco, Nora Jones, Lucinda Williams, Bono and Lou Reed. *Kannapolis* is a vivid journey into America's industrial past. Tickets: $20-$50. Jan. 23, 7:30 p.m. Kenan Auditorium, UNCW, 515 Wagoner Drive, Wilmington. For information: (910) 962-3500 or uncw.edu/arts.

Shagadelic

Hope Abounds is a nonprofit that supports individuals battling cancer. This year's eighth annual East Coast Shag Classic is a benefit tribute to Carolina beach music and all things shag. There will be shag and line-dance lessons, open dancing, and different themes and bands nightly, including Band of Oz, Jim Quick and Coastline Band, The Entertainers, and Gary Louder and Smokin' Hot. Hotel packages available. Feb. 7-10. Holiday Inn Resort, 1706 N. Lumina Ave., Wrightsville Beach. For info: (910) 256-2231 or hopeabounds.org.

All That Jazz

What better antidote to a cold night than hot Brazilian jazz? The 39th annual North Carolina Jazz Festival will feature a special evening of Brazilian performers Maucha Adnet — who sang with legendary Antonio Carlos Jobim — and her husband, Duduka da Fonseca, a member of the renowned Samba band Trio da Paz. Also on the docket: Wilmington piano sensation Grenaldo Frazier. Friday and Saturday will feature 4 1/2-hour concerts with a rotation of jazz all-stars, playing a total of seven sets. Tickets: $15-$225. Jan. 31- Feb. 2, 7:30 p.m. Hotel Ballast, 301 N. Water St., Wilmington. For info: ncjazzfestival.org.

Antiques in Winter

The thrill of the hunt made easy — the 49th annual Wilmington Antique Show & Sale will feature 35 dealers offering fine early American and English furniture, rugs, primitives and vintage items as well as silver, fine china and paintings. There will also be a silent auction, and restoration resource providers will be on-hand to repair your treasures. Presented by the North Carolina Junior Sorosis and North Carolina Sorosis. Tickets: $10. Jan. 18-19, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Jan. 20, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Wilson Center, 703 N. Third St., Wilmington. For info: (910) 791-6128 or wilmingtonantiqueshow.com.

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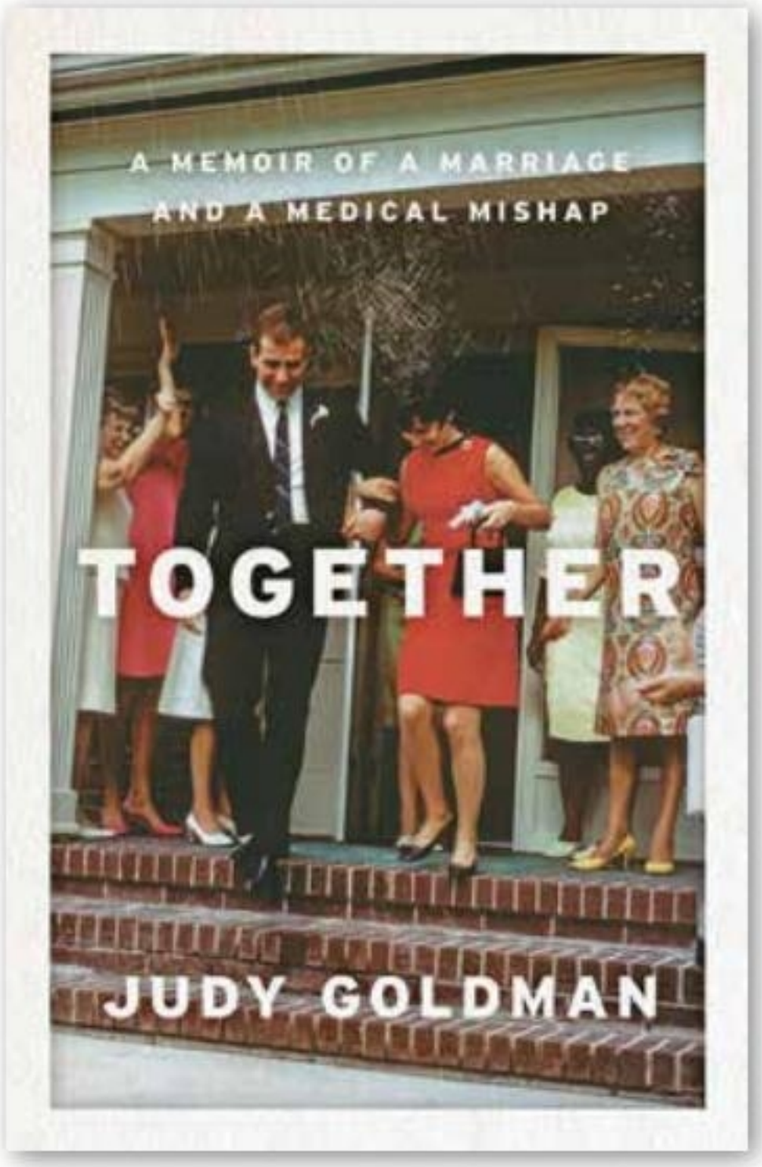

By Stephen E. Smith

Your risk for developing pancreatic cancer is about 1 in 65. The odds of your dying in a car crash are 1 in 100. If you're about to undergo a hospital procedure, you have a 3 percent chance of experiencing a mishap. But, then, if you consider all the odds for all the possibilities, your chances of avoiding every disease, every mishap, is zilch. This law of averages spares no one.

Judy Goldman's first memoir, *Losing My Sister*, a finalist for Southern Independent Booksellers Alliance for Memoir of the Year, worked, in part, from the above premise, and her latest memoir, *Together: A Memoir of a Marriage and a Medical Mishap*, is also the product of grim statistics, detailing a medical accident and the accompanying physical and emotional consequences that tested a marriage.

Life-altering calamities can begin with the best of intentions. Goldman's husband, Henry, happened upon a newspaper ad for an outpatient procedure that would alleviate the persistent back pain he'd suffered for years. It all sounded reassuringly straightforward: a simple injection or two and an immediate resumption of a normal life. The doctor would use a fluoroscope to guide his injection of steroids and an anesthetic into the epidural space between the spine and the spinal cord. But when Henry was wheeled out from the procedure, his expression was "flat and abstracted." He was paralyzed from the waist down.

The doctor assured Goldman that Henry's reaction to the procedure was normal: "Your husband is going to be all right. It'll just be a matter of time," he said, reassuringly. But he was mistaken, and the consequences of the botched treatment unleashed in Goldman a desperate avalanche of emotions — depression, guilt, hopelessness, anger, fear, despair. Adding to her anguish, there was no explanation for Henry's sudden physical disability. With the exception of the doctor who had administered the treatment — and he was not forthcoming — a faceless medical community offered few plausible answers. After the struggle and joy of four decades of marriage, after raising children and pursuing successful careers, after leading a responsible life together, the Goldmans had suffered a mind-numbing and perhaps irreversible catastrophe that would test their relationship to its core — a predicament in which Goldman had to assume the role of patient advocate in the complex medical morass America has created for itself.

Interspersed with the chapters detailing Goldman's struggles with her husband's sudden disability, she weaves the story of her early life, her marriage to Henry, their years together, all of which lend perspective and poignancy to their predicament. When she'd said yes to Henry's marriage proposal, Goldman had already mapped out the path their lives would follow. "I was not only in love with him, I was in love with the idea of a husband and wife moving through life together, youth falling away, both growing slightly stooped, hard of hearing, Henry carrying my purse for me the way old men do, our soft, imperfect last years together."

A second misadventure produced a catharsis. Two years after Henry's debilitating procedure, Goldman was confronted by a ski-masked man pointing a pistol at her abdomen. She made a quick getaway. Henry, who was recovering from a shoulder operation precipitated by his back injury, was sitting beside her in the car's passenger seat. "All of a sudden, I get it. Because somebody threatened me with a gun, I can finally cry — really cry — over what threatened Henry in that outpatient clinic two years ago. As though the holdup and the epidural are one thing. One single reminder that we're all in danger every second. The world is waiting to trip us up."

And there you have it: *The world is waiting to trip us up.* All that's

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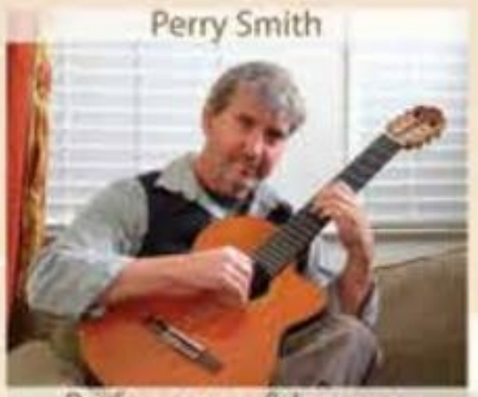
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left is the long way back and the truths that such struggles reveal about relationships and the limits of human determination.

After intense rehab, Henry recovers much of his ability to walk, albeit with a cane and the constant attention of his faithful advocate. But Goldman was left to ponder an inescapable list of "if-onlys" — if only her husband hadn't seen the ad in the newspaper; if only they'd tried other remedies; if only he'd decided to live with the pain; if only she'd waited with him before he received the epidural; if only she hadn't made things worse by over-reacting. Mostly she had to question the very beliefs that formed the foundation of their marriage — the possibility of losing Henry and the notions she had early on about how they would grow old together. She became irritable, naggy and intensely introspective: "Maybe I'm really angry with Henry for threatening to fail physically. For even obliquely threatening to die. As though he has to earn my forgiveness for what happened to him. As though his medical condition is a betrayal." Finally it all comes down to forgiveness — forgiving her husband, forgiving herself, forgiving the doctor responsible for administering the crippling epidural. Forgiving the world for tripping her up.

What we have in *Together* is a blueprint for coping with "mishaps." Goldman skillfully articulates the communality of human experience, and she's startlingly frank when relating the difficulties a patient advocate encounters. Finally, *Together* is about being married, about becoming a part of another person and building on the long-term relationship we enter into when we take our marriage vows. If Goldman doesn't offer easy answers to the vexing questions of life, she does outline a process by which we can puzzle our way into the moment and make the best of what fate offers us: "We must scrap the illusion that marrying that one perfect person will end our suffering, bring endless bliss, fix everything." What could be more honest than that?

Stephen E. Smith is a retired professor and the author of seven books of poetry and prose. He's the recipient of the Poetry Northwest Young Poet's Prize, the Zoe Kincaid Brockman Prize for poetry and four North Carolina Press awards.

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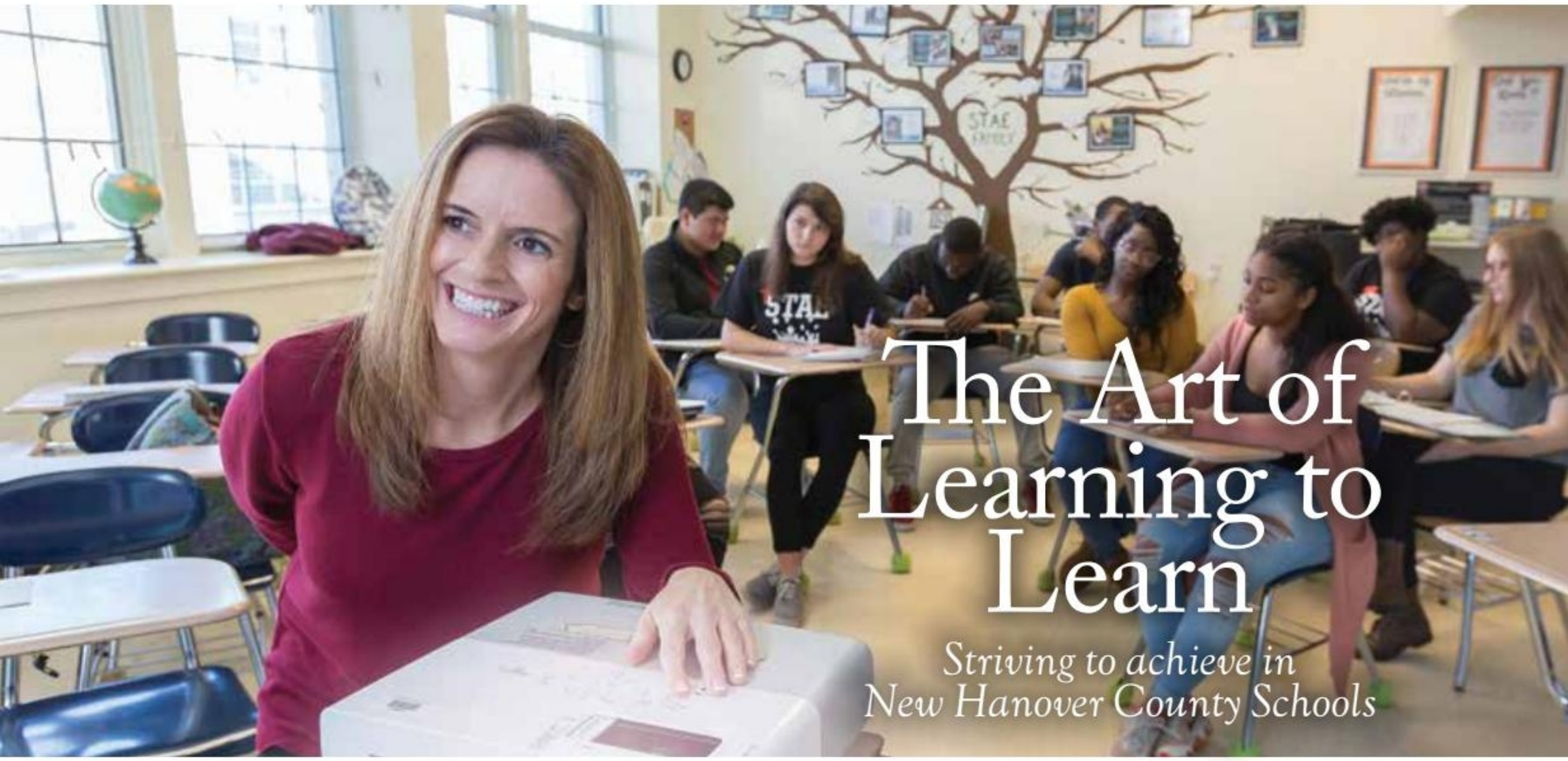

The Art of Learning to Learn

Striving to achieve in New Hanover County Schools

Jessica Eliot

Job: New Hanover High School teacher and co-founder of STAE — Striving to Achieve Excellence — a program in the New Hanover County Schools

First moved to Wilmington: 2002

Favorite spot: It depends on the day and the mood. I like Southport. It's real Southern to me.

PHOTOGRAPH BY MARK STEELMAN

By Dana Sachs

What is STAE?

It's a program in New Hanover County Schools designed to help students that have potential to go to college but need extra support and guidance. It's an elective class that starts in sixth (or) seventh grade and goes all the way up through 12th grade. So the students stay with each other all the way through. And here at New Hanover High School, the teacher stays with the same students for four years.

Are these students whose parents did not attend college?

We have students whose parents did go to college and they just need that extra support and guidance. We have some parents who have never been to college, some parents who didn't finish high school. Some students live with guardians. Some have a single mom who works multiple jobs and doesn't have time to go through this college process with them.

What might students do in the STAE classroom?

(We help) in any way they need help. We might be working on writing skills or math skills. We monitor their grades in all classes. We bring them on college field trips. We are trying to develop the students so that they're not only prepared to go to college but so that they'll have better success once they're there.

What challenges do your students face at home?

I have a couple that were displaced (by Hurricane Florence). I have had so many students that have moved around foster homes. I have had students that have been homeless in the past. Students that struggle financially. I have students that have to take on a parental role at home, helping with siblings. Almost every one of my students works, most because they need to work, not because they want extra spending money.

Did STAE originate at New Hanover High School?

No. We began creating it in 2011, soon after Dr. Tim Markley took over as superintendent of New Hanover County Schools. He wanted us to have something more local, rather than a national program. I was working in Central Office at the time, and he wanted me to develop a program that could be filtered out to all

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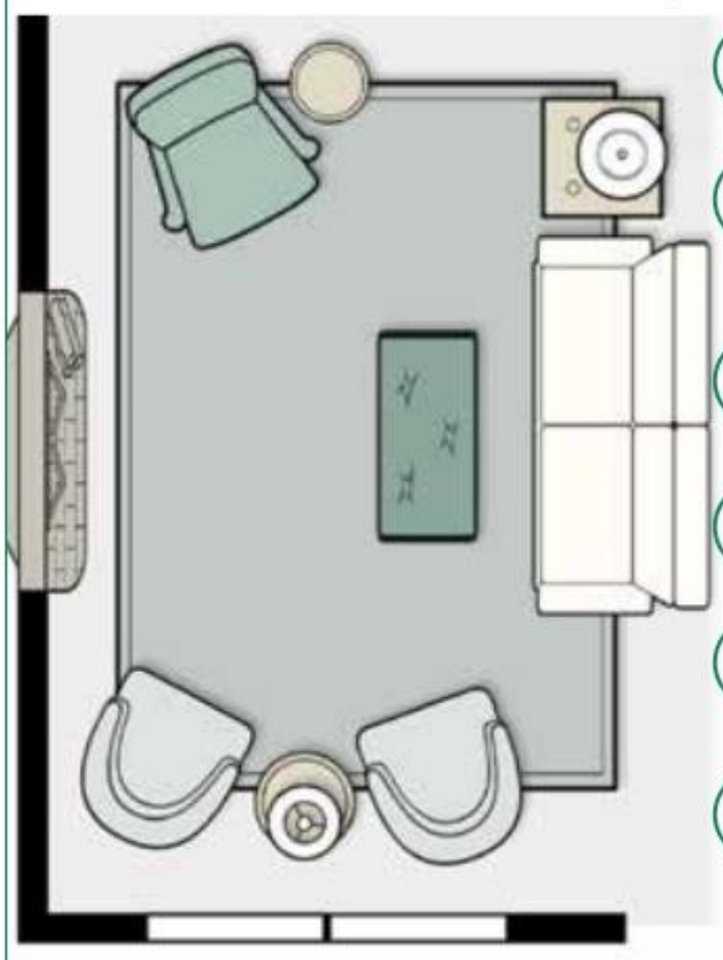
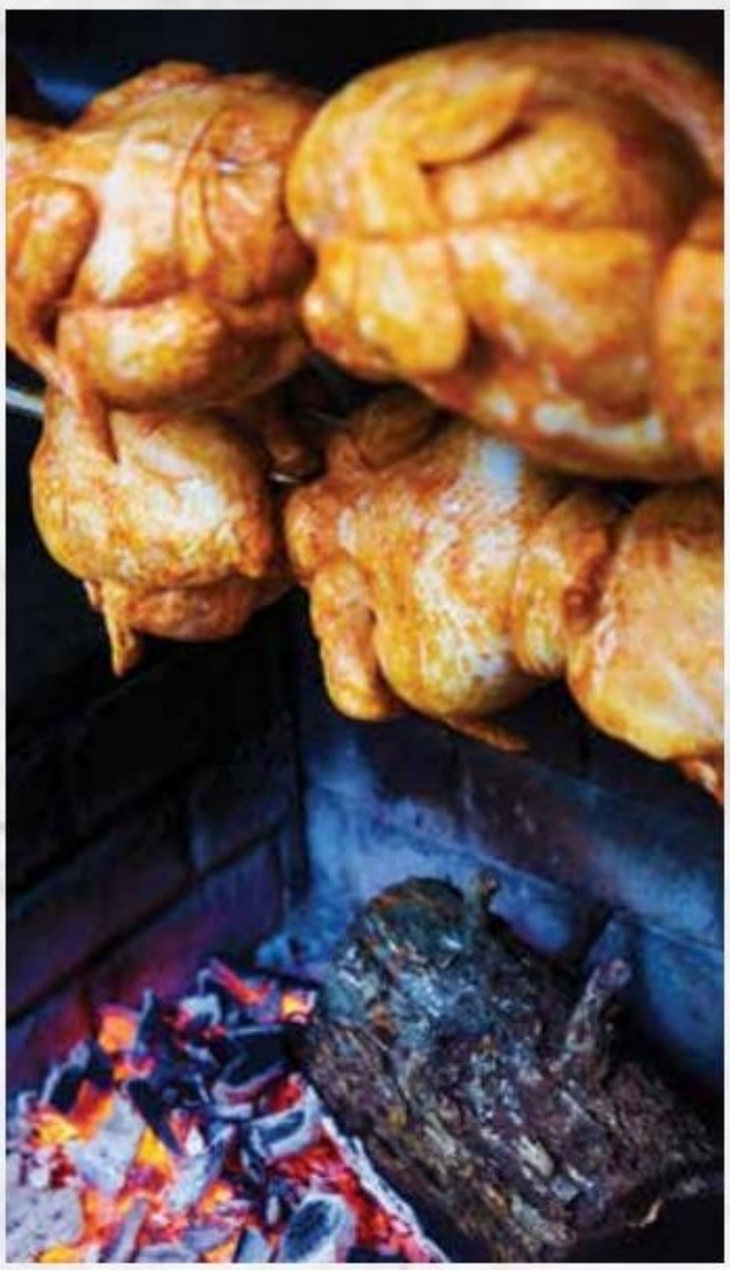


- Have a conversation about your lifestyle (who uses the room and how you entertain)
- Home visit to plan what stays and what changes based on your needs. (just a look-see and measuring)
- Determining your direction and style (colors, fabrics, finishes...all the fun parts!)
- Making a floorplan (planning where pieces will go)
- A presentation of your final design (how the room will look when it's complete)
- Complimentary white glove delivery and accessory call (putting it all together, hanging art, placing accessories and designing bookshelves)



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middle and high schools to serve students that have college potential but just need extra support. I brought in teachers and we thought, "What pieces are they missing? What pieces do they need to be more successful?"

And what did you discover was missing?

A big part of it is grit. These students want to give up once they're struggling, rather than keep pushing forward. It's that motivation piece. Having them set goals and what they need to do to get to those goals.

How else do these students benefit from the program?

A lot of times they were never taught those "soft skills": How they should come into a classroom. What to expect of a classroom. They don't necessarily have someone guiding them to teach them the importance of education and what they need to do. How communicating with a teacher is different from communicating with a classmate. Or sometimes they'll put their feet up on a desk and I have to teach them, "That's not what we do. We need to show respect to the classroom, to each other, and to the teacher." We talk about how first impressions matter. And obviously, some of them don't need those lessons. They all have different soft skills. It's individual to each student.

How do you see your students change over their four years in your classroom?

Ninth grade is "figuring your students out." A big focus is organization, keeping a planner. That's a huge thing in any high school. Behavior issues — we unfortunately have a lot of that in ninth grade, across the board. Tenth grade, you get into biology, those tougher courses, where tutors come in and work with them. We really push the importance of grades. Eleventh, you're starting to do college research and get them prepared for the ACT, SAT. Just to let them realize that now is their year — they have to start making those decisions and stay focused on what they want to do. And then 12th grade, the whole fall semester we worked on college applications. I require them to apply for a certain number of

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scholarships by certain dates, just to keep them on track. By 12th grade, they're really my babies. I have all their numbers in my phone. I have their parents' numbers. I am in constant communication with them.

Can you tell me about any of your former students?

I have a student who is now a lawyer. When he first started (STAE), he was a handful. He was one of the ones I just stayed on constantly. He got into some trouble. We talked about how what he does in and out of school impacts his college choices. By the time he got to college, though, he and a couple of the other STAE students were competing for their grades. They were at different schools, but they stayed in touch. He would send me messages: "I have a higher GPA than so-and-so." He ended up graduating with honors. Then he decided to go to law school. And his first class in law school, he contacted me and said, "I don't know if I can do this." I gave him a little pep talk. He told me his only reason for even graduating high school was because of STAE. And I ended up getting a law school graduation invitation from him and it said, "Without you, I never would have been here."

Teaching STAE students takes commitment. It can't be attractive to every teacher.

You have to love what you do. You have to really want to go above and beyond in caring for your students. You have to be invested in making sure that your students are successful in life, beyond just the classroom. It is a huge challenge. They are not the easy students.

For seven years, you had a high-level job at the Board of Education Central Office, but then you went back to teaching. Why?

I missed kids. I was leaving every day thinking, "What did I accomplish that made a difference?" It just wasn't me.

Dana Sachs' latest novel, The Secret of the Nightingale Palace, *is available at bookstores, online and throughout Wilmington.*

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Pulling the Thread

In Asheville, learning the untold story with Denise Kiernan

By Wiley Cash · Photographs by Mallory Cash

My friendships with writers are unlike other friendships I have. Most solid, enduring relationships take years to build. This is true of my longest friendships, but it is not true of my friendships with writers; these relationships are intense and honest from the moment of inception. I have often wondered what sets writer friendships apart, and I have decided that it is a combination of our solitary work and our inclination toward inquiry. People who spend so much time alone have a lot to share when they get together. All of this is true of my friendship with *New York Times* best-selling author Denise Kiernan.

I first met Denise in Asheville, North Carolina, at a literary festival in the summer of 2014. Her book *The Girls of Atomic City: The Untold Story of the Women Who Helped Win WWII* had been released the previous year, and at the literary festival in Asheville she was easily the best known writer in the lineup. You could not mention her name without someone exclaiming, "Oh, she was on *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart*!" Denise's fame and success appeared instantaneous, but like nearly every other writer I have befriended over the years, her journey has been long, circuitous and interesting.

On a chilly day in early December, Denise and I sat down at Little Jumbo, a cocktail bar on Lexington Avenue in Asheville's Five Points district. The bar is housed in a building that has served a number of purposes since its construction in the 1920s: general store, office space and delivery service, among them. Regardless of what has come before Little Jumbo, co-owners Chall Gray and Jay Sanders have managed to marry the feel of the Prohibition speakeasy to a flair for Gilded Age indulgence. The ceiling is composed of original tin tiles, which reflect the soft light of sconces and chandeliers. The glass-paned front door is set between two huge display windows that house wood-topped tables

and leather-wrapped benches. Past the imposing bar, where dozens of bottles hover above dark-stained wood countertops, elegantly appointed sitting areas featuring period appropriate armchairs and sofas await patrons. Little Jumbo has a sophisticated, mysterious feel that is also welcoming and warm.

Chall Gray was behind the bar during our visit, and after Denise and I ordered and received our drinks — an old-fashioned martini for her and a whiskey for me — we found seats by one of the display windows.

"Something just dawned on me," I said. "I know you as the friend who published *The Girls of Atomic City* and *The Last Castle* (the story of the Biltmore House), but I don't know much about your life and work before those books."

Denise looked out the window as if she were opening and closing the drawers and cabinets of her memory while searching for a way to respond. The weather had turned dreary. It was raining. Cars rolled by, and people on foot passed our window with their collars upturned. Denise smiled and looked back at me, whatever she had been looking for apparently found.

"That's a long story," she said. "But it all started with me playing the flute right down the road in Brevard. I was a rising high school junior, and I was at a summer camp at the Brevard Music Center. Someone there suggested I attend the North Carolina School for the Arts. I did, and it changed my life."

From there, a story I had never heard and never could have imagined unfolded over the course of the afternoon. After high school, Denise moved to New York City to pursue a pre-med degree from

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NYU. While there she fell in love with the city, especially its arts scene.

"All of my friends were artists," she said, "but something was telling me to pursue a practical career. I had decided to apply to medical school, but I wanted to spend the summer in Europe before studying for the MCAT (Medical College Admissions Test)." That summer in Europe extended to more than a year abroad.

"When I came back to the States I wasn't interested in medical school anymore," she said. "I was interested in environmental education, so I enrolled in graduate school at the University of Washington." It was there that a flier for the university's student newspaper caught her eye. "I had no journalism experience," she said, "but I had always written, and I wanted to do something with my writing. That was enough for the editor to give me a chance."

After graduate school, her love for journalism won out over her love for environmental education. "I pursued an internship with *The Village Voice*," she said. "And I mean I really pursued it. I called and learned there were no internships available, so I traveled across the country and showed up at *The Village Voice*'s New York office and asked them in person." What happened next changed her life.

"I worked under a legendary investigative reporter named Wayne Barrett," she said, her eyes growing misty. "He passed away a few years ago. He was one of the last great investigative journalists. He didn't care who you were; if there was a story to be uncovered, he was coming after you."

Denise, a doggedly determined young person with a nose for news, had met her match: a similarly dogged, seasoned journalist who, like her, did not take well to being told no. Over the next several years as an intern and then as a freelance reporter who regularly published investigative stories in *The New York Times*, *The Village Voice* and *Ms. Magazine*, Denise found herself covering the 1995 United Nations Women's Conference in Beijing, shooting pool with The Cure, writing about the Beastie Boys, and organizing her own crew as a field producer covering European soccer for ESPN.

"All of those experiences taught me how to chase down leads, to pull at the thread of a

story, to organize and focus my work."

These skills clearly served her well in writing her two best-known books, the aforementioned *The Girls of Atomic City* and *The Last Castle*, both of which dig into the backstories of American history that most of us never learn. *Girls* explains the largely unknown role of the women in Oak Ridge, Tennessee, who helped develop the atomic bomb. *Castle* plumbs the lives of George and Edith Vanderbilt in the years before and after they built America's largest private home.

During our conversation, Chall had left the bar and delivered a setup known as the Jumbo Service. Ours was a special chilled Manhattan accompanied by elegant stemware and a side of maraschino cherries, all literally served on a silver platter. Denise and I poured another round of drinks and toasted to stories, both the stories we have written and the stories that have made us writers.

Wiley Cash lives in Wilmington with his wife and their two daughters. His latest novel, The Last Ballad, *is available wherever books are sold.*

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Count Your Cozies

Life and babies are gifts that pass too soon

By Caroline Hamilton Langerman

While you were napping, I picked up the house. It was hard to get started, but once I did, I went hard. I started with the baby books, looking fondly on one titled *Calling All Animals*, a page-by-page catalog of creatures and their plural forms: a flamboyance of flamingos, a pride of lions, and so on.

The mess was so vast that picking it up seemed only to reveal its depths: under a soccer jersey on the counter, a dribble of applesauce. Behind a turned-over kid's chair in the family room, fingerprints on the wall. To make it bearable, I started a game of naming each mess. In the wicker basket near the TV, a slavery of stuffed animals. Under the kitchen table, a kingdom of crumbs. The blocks, Legos, play foods in the den: an apology of plastics. In the mudroom, a silliness of shoes. Everywhere, a confusion of creams.

The game was mostly sarcastic — I got a little jilt of pleasure every time I could aptly insult my new possessions. Three years ago I had been a size-2 young professional in New York, with my own office and a blissful ignorance of "sleep training." The only thing that made me feel better about the whiplash of becoming a stay-at-home-mom in North Carolina was a trick I'd read in a self-help book, "name the negative," which involved saying your bad feelings out loud in order to own them. I had always been an expert whiner; I could practically teach a course in it now. But my rhythm was broken when, on the floor of the mudroom closet, I came to a miniature brick-red jacket, made of softest fleece. Size 3T. L.L. Bean, read the little emblem sewed on the front breast. Three little snaps — just by looking at them, I could hear them pleasantly popping into place — led to an upright collar. It brought to mind your smile, your signature cheeks, the sweet cowlick of your brown hair that won salutes from strangers. "Great bedhead," a hipster once said in our direction as we exited a pancake house. I'm pretty sure he was serious.

This jacket, everything it meant to me, was treasure. I needed a phrase to relay the dearness of its entire "family" of sweaters and coats that lay crumpled on the ground in the closet. A jealousy of jackets? A freedom of fleece? I held its sleeve to my cheek before adding it to the hanger. Nothing could quite relay the joy I had felt upon receiving one of its cousins, a matching white sweater-suit, when you were about 6 months old. "Isn't that for a girl?" my husband had asked, when I took it out of the box. No, it was for a baby. The top was soft white yarn, crocheted and double-breasted like a pea coat, complete with a hood. Below it, little sweater pants that cuffed at the ankle. "Sweater pants?" he asked again, with one eyebrow up. Sweater pants! Life's sweet reward!

I moved to the upstairs — tiptoeing over the creaky step and past the nurseries — to find a tide of toothpaste in the sinks. A harrowing of hairballs. There, in the master bedroom, a nightmare of nursing bras. When I saw the king bed with its rumpled covers, a scarcity of sleep.

But as I threw damp towels into the hamper, I also hummed with the happiness of all the fuzzies in the family. You'd worn a jacket with a pointy gnome's hood to the King's Drive Farmers Market in Charlotte, making you look like a baby fir among the Christmas trees. The white and red holiday sweater with a moose on it, and the tiny tuft of "hair"

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between the horns, was the perfect ensemble for a Radio Flyer wagon ride among the camellias and red maples in Myers Park. Your baby sister's polar bear bunting and strawberry hat with a green stem, or her polka-dot pullover, cheery with pink and purple splotches, could turn a tantrum into a photo-op. Raincoats with flannel lining came in sizes so small they shouldn't be allowed. "Put your hood up, Margaret," you said to your sister, meaningfully, before Hurricane Florence pelted down.

I looked up from the washing machine out the upstairs window and watched magnolia trees bend in the wind. Something about nature could make me momentarily forget the current iteration of myself — so that I was not a mom, or a jilted laundress, but just the spirit of my core elements. Suddenly I was the baby, hearing the legs of my puffy pink snowsuit whistle against each other while I trudged in the yard. Next, my hand clutching a rosebud blanket, worn down to its fibers, that I dragged through the kitchen while something was cooking. And then came the unexpected textures, not soft but so loved: the familiar nylon of my dad's wind-pants as he cracked open a beer after a day of college coaching. The scratchy wool of my mother's kilt as I traced its lines with my finger in a velvet church pew. The pleasant weight of my brother's mildewed ice hockey bag, which I felt honored to carry, out of the skating rink into the dusk. A pair of alligator mittens with black button eyes that my mother had knitted for me, poking over the vinyl school bus seat like a puppet show. One snowy night, I'd had the urgent desire to place a Kleenex on each of my stuffed animals. "Stay warm from the storm," I repeated to each creature under my care. Warmth had always been elemental to me, and now it was my turn to give it.

When I heard you crying, then, the loud, low wail of someone waking up in a sour mood, I was this version of myself: 34 years old, tired as heck, but losing out to the knowledge that whatever warmth I could summon would last a lifetime. And to help me get there, I had a loving of layers, a significance of sweaters, a Christmas-morning of cozies.

Caroline Hamilton Langerman has written for many publications, including Town & Country *and* The New York Times. *She lives in Charlotte with her husband and two children.*

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Winter Salads

Eat well – and wild

By Jane Lear

Salad in the cold months can be tricky. The mild, tender lettuces available at any supermarket are all well and good, but most other salad staples — tomatoes are an obvious example — are disappointing out of season.

More important, though, a typical garden-variety salad doesn't suit the heartier, richer food we crave at this time of year. Serving a plate of nicely dressed hothouse lettuces after braised short ribs or cassoulet, for instance, can seem tacked on and curiously unsatisfying. Dinner guests tend to pick at it and wonder what's for dessert rather than appreciate the punctuation in the meal, so to speak, and feel revitalized.

For the sort of bracing counterpoint I'm talking about, look to bolder greens such as endive, watercress, arugula, the pale inner leaves of escarole, or springy, spiky frisée. Slivers of sweet, earthy celery root, tangy green apple or aromatic fennel will help matters along.

One of my favorite winter salads always puts me in mind of the Mediterranean — in particular, Provence and Sicily. The recipe stars fresh fennel and any members of the mandarin citrus family, which includes satsumas, tangerines and clementines. The large, relatively new hybrid marketed as "Sumo" (easily recognized by its prominent topknot) has a superb balance of sweetness and acidity, and the fruit segments, which can be neatly slipped out of their ultra-thin membranes, keep their shape on the plate.

Dandelion greens — which have become more readily available — have a clean, sharp flavor that also reminds me of the Mediterranean. That's where their use in the kitchen was developed, and you can trace the word "dandelion" from the Latin down through the French *dent-de-lion*, or "lion's tooth." This is no big surprise, given the jagged shape of the leaves, but personally I have a fondness for the common French name, *pissenlit*, which reflects their purported diuretic properties.

Wild dandelion greens have intense flavor, but these days, I prefer them cultivated unless I know that the grass they've been plucked from is pesticide-free. Wild or cultivated, they have a great affinity for a hot skillet dressing. It won't necessarily wilt the greens, but it mellows them and softens their rawness. Toasted nuts give the vinaigrette a suave sweetness.

The evolution of salad from a side dish or separate course into the main focus of a meal has come into its own, and this makes scratching together a nourishing, delicious weeknight supper — one of life's greatest challenges — just a bit simpler. Two staples that I swear by are lentils and sausage, especially the smoked Polish variety called kielbasa.

Lentils are a great gateway legume. Unlike most dried beans, there's no need to soak them beforehand, they cook quickly, and slide from homey to haute with aplomb. I suppose you could say they've been around the block and know a thing or two: After all, they were there in the beginning — er, Beginning — as the pottage for which Esau gave up his birthright in Genesis 25:34.

Although I've never met a lentil I didn't like, I'm a sucker for the pretty green French ones called *lentilles du Puy*. Yep, I know they're more expensive than other lentils varieties, but they're worth it. Their characteristic flavor — peppery and minerally yet delicate — comes from the good volcanic soil and dry, sunny climate in which they're grown. And because they contain less starch than other varieties, they exhibit a lovely firm-tender texture when cooked. In fact, if your opinion of

PHOTOGRAPH BY JAMES STEFIUK

lentils was formed by one too many mushy stews at indifferent vegetarian restaurants, then these will be a revelation.

French green lentils are delicious in soup, of course, or scooped into the hollow of a baked winter squash, or tossed with small pasta shells and crumbles of fresh goat cheese. What I do most often, though, is serve them in a bistro-style warm salad with kielbasa. Add some crusty bread, good butter, and a glass or two of red, and life will feel very civilized.

All three of the salads described above are incredibly versatile. As you'll see in the recipes — think of them more as guidelines — one ingredient can often be switched for another, and as you go along, don't be afraid to improvise, based on the contents of your refrigerator. Odds are, it will taste wonderful.

Mandarin-Fennel Salad

Serves 4

Add some cress or arugula sprigs if you like; substitute green olives for the black, or forgo them altogether. Ruby-red pomegranate seeds would add sparkle and texture, and parsley leaves, an herbal punch.

1 large fennel bulb, trimmed of its feathery stalk and some fronds reserved

3 mandarins, peeled

1/4 cup brine-cured black olives

Your favorite best-quality extra-virgin olive oil

Fresh lemon juice

Coarse flaky salt (Maldon adds a wonderful crunch) and freshly ground black pepper

1. Cut the fennel bulb in half lengthwise and discard the tough outer layer or two to expose the cream-colored heart. Then cut the bulb into very thin slices with a handheld slicer or a very sharp knife. Put them in a salad bowl.
2. Remove the weblike pith from the peeled mandarins (children love doing this and are very good at it). Separate the segments and, depending on the thickness and tightness of the membranes that enclose each one, remove those or not; it's entirely up to you. Cut the fruit in half crosswise and add it, along with the olives, to the fennel.
3. Drizzle the salad with olive oil and lemon juice to taste and gently combine. Scatter with salt and a few chopped fennel fronds. Season with a few grinds of pepper.

Dandelion Salad with Toasted Pine Nut Vinaigrette

Serves 6

I've called for sherry vinegar below, but balsamic or red wine vinegar would be fine. If you don't have pine nuts, use pecans, hazelnuts or homemade croutons. Dried cranberries or cherries would be a nice embellishment, too.

6 handfuls tender dandelion greens, washed, spun dry, and tough stems removed

3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

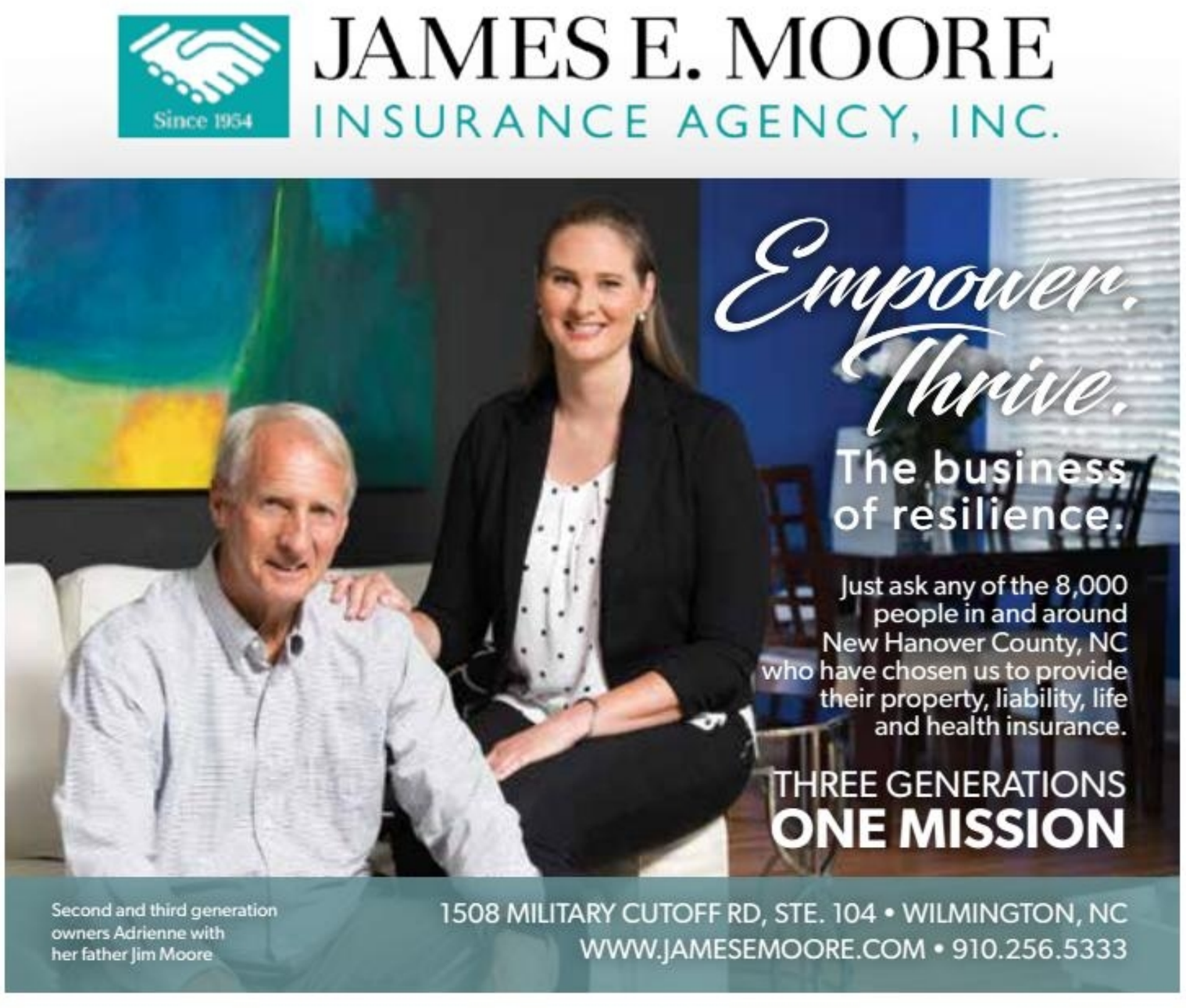
2 garlic cloves, finely chopped

3 tablespoons pine nuts

1 tablespoon sherry vinegar, or to taste

Coarse salt and freshly ground pepper

Shaved or very coarsely grated Parmigiano-Reggiano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1. Tear the greens into generous bite-size pieces and mound them in a large heat-proof bowl.
2. Heat the oil in a small skillet over moderate heat until hot. Add the garlic and pine nuts, cook, stirring them often, until the garlic is golden. Stir in the vinegar, then pour over the greens. Season with salt and pepper and toss to coat. Add the Parm and toss once more. Serve right away.

Warm Lentil Salad with Kielbasa
Serves 4

This salad, a staff favorite at *Gourmet*, varies according to my time and inclination. It's perfectly delicious with nothing more than onion and garlic, or carrot and garlic. As for the kielbasa, feel free to substitute another smoked sausage, country ham, pancetta or lardons — thick-cut strips of bacon sliced into matchsticks and cooked until crisp. Serve it on a bed of watercress or tender leaves of a Boston or Bibb lettuce. If desired, gild the lily by topping each serving with a fried egg.

2 cups French green lentils (*lentilles du Puy*), picked over and rinsed

6 cups water

1 bay leaf

A couple of sprigs of fresh thyme or, if you can find it, winter savory

Coarse salt and freshly ground pepper

1/2 cup plus 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, divided

1 cup finely chopped onion

1 cup diced carrot

1 cup diced celery, plus chopped celery leaves for garnish

1 tablespoon finely chopped garlic

1/4 cup redwine or sherry vinegar

1 tablespoon Dijon mustard

1 smoked kielbasa sausage, cut crosswise into 1/4-inch slices

1. Bring the lentils, water, bay leaf and thyme sprigs to a boil in a 3-quart pot. Reduce the heat and simmer the lentils, covered, until they are almost tender, about 15 minutes. Add 1/2 teaspoon salt and keep simmering until tender but still firm, about another 5 minutes.
2. Meanwhile, heat 2 tablespoons oil in a large skillet over medium-low heat. Add the onion, carrot, celery and garlic and cook, stirring every so often, until the vegetables are just softened and smell delicious, 8 to 10 minutes.
3. While the lentils and aromatics are both working, make the vinaigrette: Whisk together the vinegar and mustard in a small bowl and then whisk in the remaining 1/2 cup oil. Season to taste with salt and pepper.
4. Drain the lentils in a colander, discarding the herbs. Return the lentils to the pot and stir in the vegetables and vinaigrette. Cook over low heat a few minutes until hot, remove from the heat and cover to keep warm. Wipe out the skillet and brown the kielbasa on both sides. Stir into the lentils and garnish with celery leaves.

Jane Lear was the senior articles editor at Gourmet *and features director at* Martha Stewart Living.

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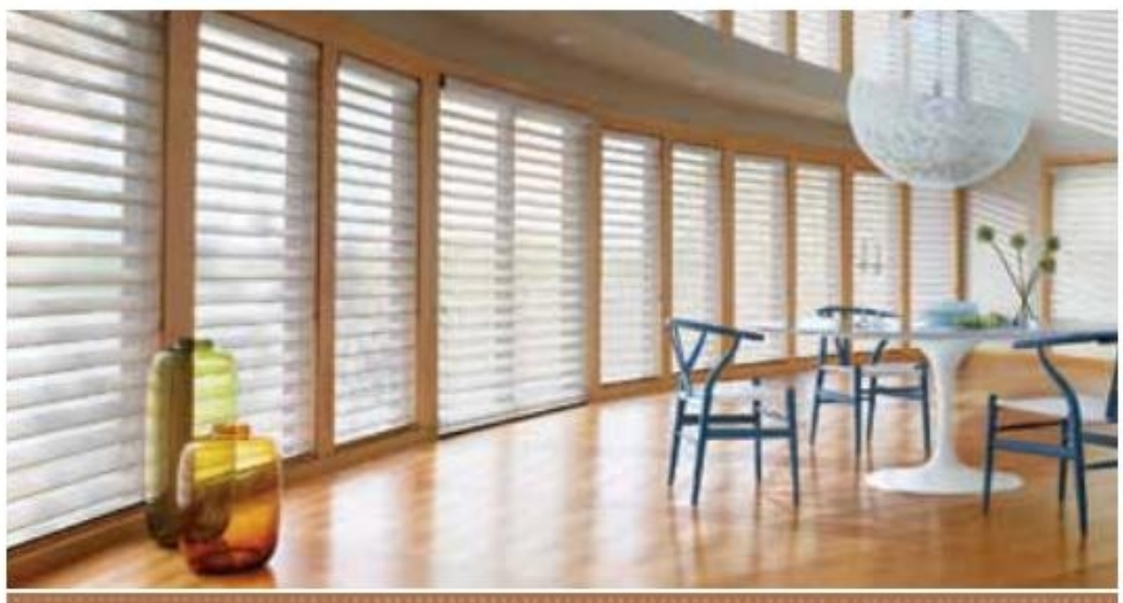

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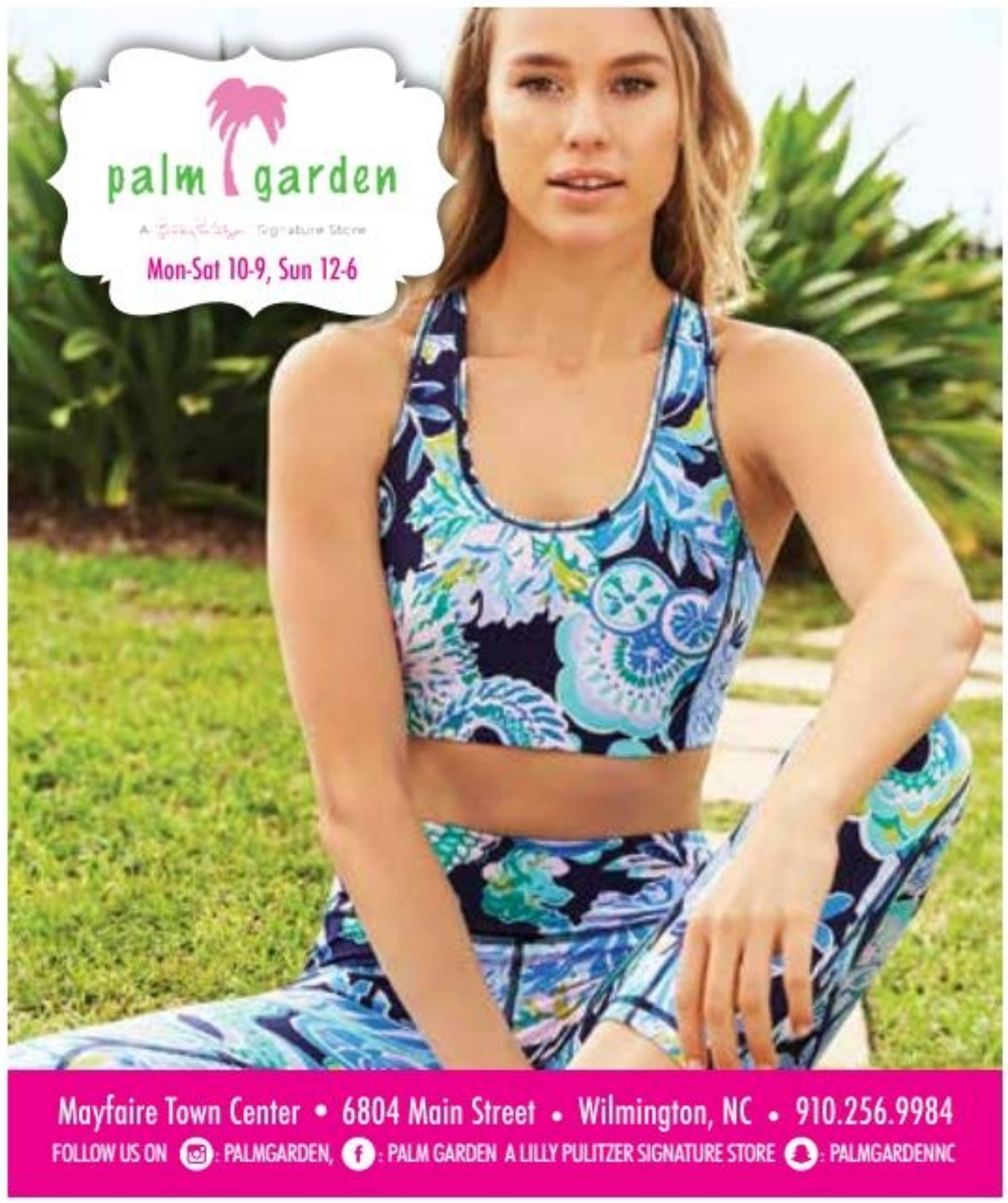

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Make a Note of It

A catalog of the oddities of life

By Susan S. Kelly

For a certain kind of writer — OK, *this* kind of writer — what's in your Costco cart, and what you do at night to get ready for bed, is invaluable and fascinating. Unfortunately, this sort of ephemera, discussed offhand in a grocery store parking lot, or city park, or next door on the treadmill, or at the office water cooler, tends to get lost, forgotten or ignored while you're bringing in the trash cans, refilling the copier paper tray, or debating shredded or chunk parm.

So I make a practice of writing everything down, copying it to the computer, printing it out, punching holes in it, and filing it in notebooks under tabs, just like you did in fourth grade. A new year seems like a good time to revisit these collected works, and reconfirms my opinion that people will tell you *anything*.

What you may classify, in today's parlance, as oversharing or TMI is pure gold for a writer. You never know when you'll need an offhand comment like, "My grandchildren all sound like outlaws or whaling ships: Sophie Morgan. Casey Jackson. Wyatt James," to punch up a scene. Or my friend's house cleaners, a gay couple that comes while she's at work, and routinely leaves complaint notes in the fridge saying, "Why don't you get something decent to eat?" And while we're on the subject of fridges, there's my friend who told me she looked so terrible one day that she couldn't go out in public. Instead, she went to the drive-through window at Krispy Kreme and bought four bottles of milk. Because she remembered that, as a child, Krispy Kreme had the best milk.

It pains me that I will likely never find a place to use this email: "Remind me to tell you the story some time about the husband of our class valedictorian (who herself picked her nose and ate it in class) who came to a hometown funeral and his tooth moved when he talked. I didn't see it, but it was well reported by another friend." Still, I'm comforted that, sooner or later, I'll probably be able to fit in my Charleston friend's road trip with her history-buff father to visit all the Civil War battlefields. But only the ones that the Confederacy won. So much for revisionist history. And Gettysburg.

Next time you make a move, stay focused on what's really important and do what one friend did: While everything's being wrapped, packed and stacked, draw a big smiley face on the box that has all the liquor in it.

Embarrassment tales are a dime a dozen, but here's one I bet you won't find in that long-gone "Was My Face Red" page in *Reader's Digest*. The day after giving birth, a friend was immensely relieved when the doc came into her hospital room. She opened her gown, showed him her breasts and said, "I am sooo glad you're here. My milk has come in and they hurt so badly and can you look at them and tell me if they're normal and give me something for them?" The doctor looked at the floor for a long minute, then said, "I'm the pediatrician."

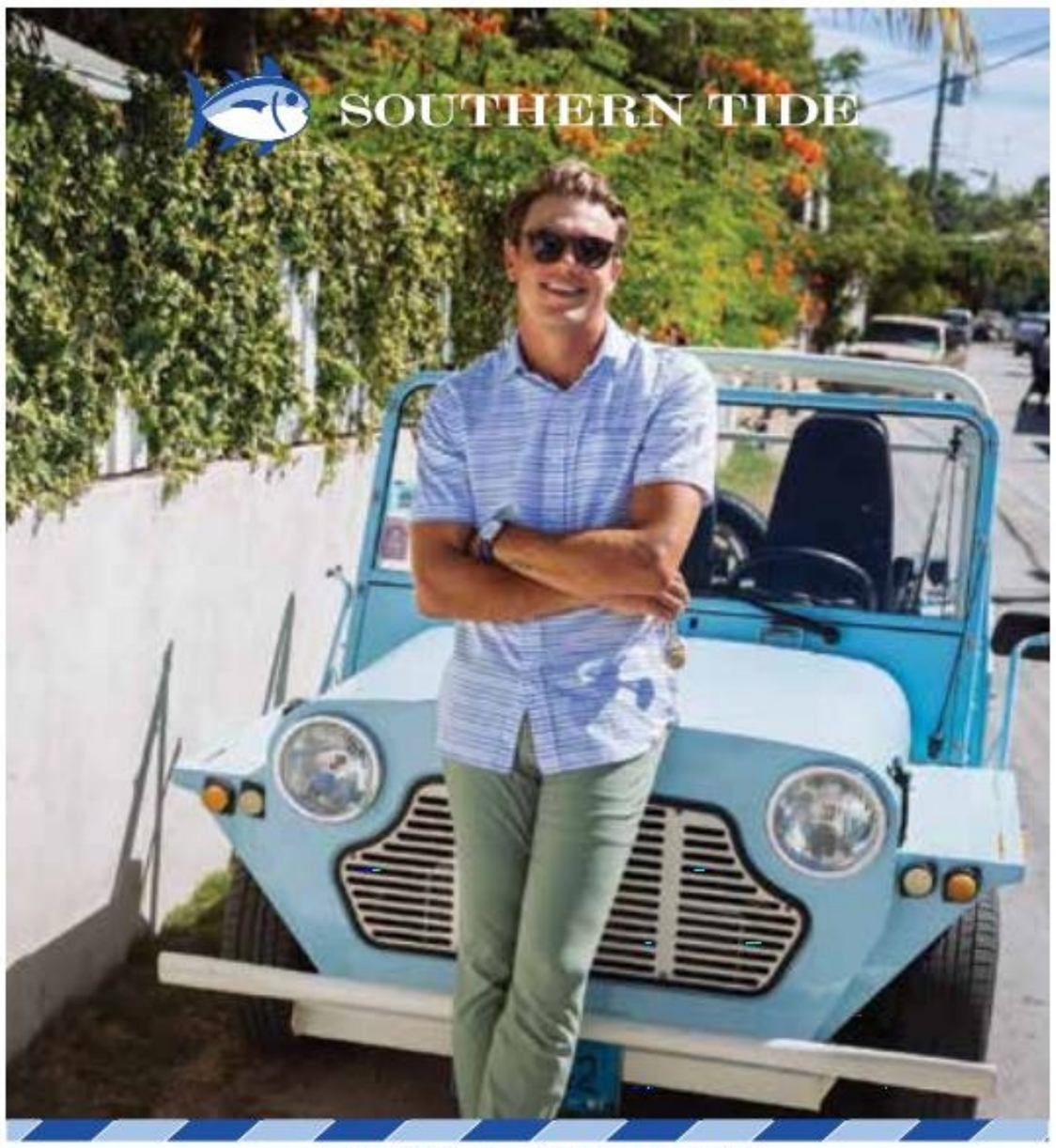
But seriously, what is it about underwear? Stories tend from the mild — the friend who stained (OK, steeped) — all her heirloom linens in tea for the perfect antique shade, which was inspired by the memory of her mother boiling her bras when she came home from boarding school, to the lawyer who took off his blazer at work, not realizing a pair of underwear was stuck to the back of his shirt. Let that be a lesson to check your lint traps. Tricot has a natural affinity for non-iron Brooks Brothers shirts.

Underwear-related and completely unedited from the notebook original, this gem of a tail, I mean tale:

I know airport toilets are all about efficiency, but they are overzealous. The best news is that every toilet I visited had seat covers plentiful, and I visited plenty between RDU, Dallas and Denver. So, I head for the toilet with 90 coats, backpack, luggage. As you disrobe, the toilet flushes because you're moving. Then, I get the toilet cover assembled, and another auto-flush because you're moving. Which creates the problem, because you've set the cover on the seat and it flushes the cover down, so you have to get another cover assembled. Of course it flushes again as you turn around to take off pants to sit down, but this time you're holding the cover, but it keeps flushing forever and your cover is fairly mangled, so by that time you are holding it, trying to undo your pants and sit on it while it's flushing, but still maintain sanitary integrity holding the seat cover and you sit down in a hurry still holding the seat cover that is trying to go down the toilet. It was exhausting and a complete waste of water.

And it's only January.

Susan Kelly is a blithe spirit, author of several novels, and proud grandmother.



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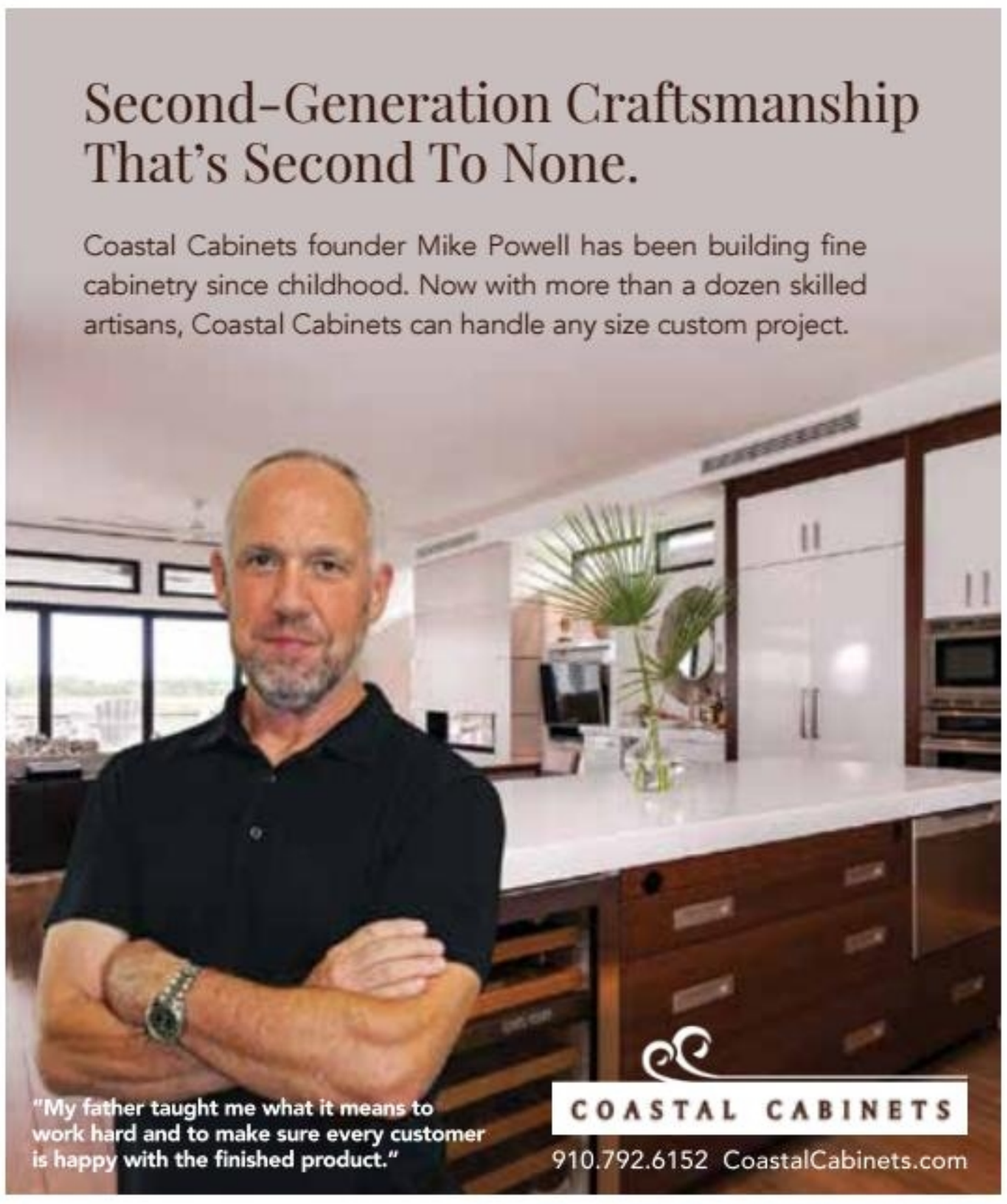

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Yellow-Bellied Sapsucker

A bird that abounds but always pleases

By Susan Campbell

Woodpeckers abound here in eastern North Carolina. On a given day you might see up to eight different species. Only one, however, is a winter visitor: the handsome yellow-bellied sapsucker. This medium-size black and white bird is well camouflaged against the tree trunks, where it is typically found. It also sports red plumage on the head, as so many North American species do. The female has only a red crown, whereas the male also sports a red throat. And, as their name implies, both sexes have a yellow tinge to their bellies. However, young of the year arriving in late October to early November are drab, with grayish plumage and lacking the colorful markings of their parents. But by the time they head back north in March, they too, will be well-patterned.

There are four sapsucker species found in North America. The yellow-bellied has the largest range and is the only one seen east of the Rockies. Sapsuckers do, in fact, feed on sap year-round. They seek out softer hardwood trees and drill holes through the bark into the living tissue. This wound will then ooze sap in short order. The carbohydrates in the liquid provide significant nourishment to the birds and furthermore, there are insects that get trapped in the sticky substance. Holes made by yellow-bellied sapsuckers form neat rows in the bark of red maples, tulip poplars and even Bradford pears in our area. Pines, however, not only tend to have bark that is too thick for sapsuckers to penetrate but rapidly scab over, rendering only a very brief flow of sap.

The injury caused by sapsuckers is generally not fatal to the tree — as long as it is healthy to begin with. Infection of the wound by fungi or other diseases may occur in older or stressed trees. Although the relationship is not mutually beneficial, sapsuckers need the trees for their survival. It is also interesting to note that other birds use the wells created by sapsuckers. Birds known to have a "sweet tooth," such as orioles and hummingbirds, will take advantage of the yellow-bellied sapsucker's handiwork.

The species breeds in pine forests throughout boreal Canada, the upper Midwest as well as New England. We do have summering populations at elevation in western North Carolina. It is not unusual to find them around Blowing Rock in the warmer months. As is typical for woodpeckers, sapsuckers create cavities in dead trees for nesting purposes. They use calls as well as drumming to advertise their territory. The typical call note is a short, high-pitched catlike mewing sound. They use more emphatic squealing and rapid tapping of their bills against dead wood or other suitable resonating surfaces to warn would-be competitors of their presence.

In winter, yellow-bellieds quietly coexist with the other woodpeckers in the area. They will seek out holly and other berries in addition to feeding on sap. These birds will feed on suet too, so they may be attracted to backyard feeding stations. Generally the yellow-bellied does not drink sugar water, since feeders designed for hummingbirds or orioles are not configured for use by clinging species. Of course, as with all birds, it may be lured in by fresh water: another reason to maintain a birdbath or two (even if you live on a lake). Seeing a sapsucker at close range is always a treat, so keep an eye out for this unusual woodpecker.

Susan would love to receive your wildlife sightings and photos. She can be contacted at susan@ncaves.com.

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the artist in me creative juices starting to rise.

I thought about getting my camera set up
to capture the narrow, slivermoon
just over the mountaintop ridge,

treetops shimmering with the steady wind . . .
just enough light left
to make a great shot.

Then the 24° windchill reminded me
of how beautiful it is to be warm.

Now the creative juices are cooling down
my socksfeet warming beside the fire.

That moon will have to reside in my memory
as well as all those stars.

– Raymond Whitaker

Live Oak Love Affair

An arboreal ode to the monarch of the Southern forest

By Nan Graham • Photograph by Andrew Sherman

The Druids, those weird ancient Brits, viewed the oak tree as a spiritual entity, an object of worship. It was the chief among oaks, among all trees. They considered the oak to be a "cosmic storehouse of wisdom," king of the forest. The personification of strength and wisdom. Unbeatable.

Among the legends of the tree is its relationship with mistletoe, which grows at the peak of the tree. With its inherent femininity, it literally hangs out with the masculine oak. The oak topped with mistletoe are the woodland "power couple." The combination assures a happy marriage, so believers say.

Another clinging sweetie is the resurrection fern, which appears to wither and die on the oak's branch but magically springs back to life when it gets a good rain. The live oak not only hangs out with mistletoe and resurrection fern, but is also partial to Spanish moss as well here in the Cape Fear Low Country. The long, gray beards of the Spanish moss have become a signature characteristic of this Southern icon. Thankfully, none of these cuddling attachments are parasites, and they do add to the seductive mystery of the live oaks.

The Roman author Pliny tells of eating acorns as a way of divining the future. But mystical qualities are not the live oaks' only attributes. Medical uses of its acorns and bark also appear in North America and Europe. Native Americans used acorns and bark remedies to heal bleeding, swelling and even eradicate tumors. In Europe, the oak was used as an antidote for poisons, a diuretic for swollen ankles, and a quinine substitute for fevers by herbalists. The Welsh rubbing an oak tree "with the palm of the left hand on Midsummer's Day" assures every day in the coming year will be a healthy one.

The following curative instructions were given for various illnesses: Walk around the oak. Concentrate on your ailment going away. Wish for the problem to be carried away by the first bird to light on the tree after you complete the directions. There . . . you are cured.

Here in the Cape Fear Low Country, the live oak, signature tree of the Deep South, is bountiful. The Southern oak reaches old age at 700 and approaches the end of its life at 1,000 years. Though the Great Basin bristlecone pine takes the prize as the oldest tree in the world — 5,067 years old, outliving even the sequoias on our West Coast — the Southern live oak may be the most beloved of the giant trees.

The Southern live oak, or *Quercus virginiana*, even has her own society: 8,680 members strong! Not a single member of the Live Oak Society is a human being; except for the person who serves as chairman, all the members are live oaks. All officers of the society are trees. Founded in 1934, the society has only had two presidents. The first, Locke Breaux, lost her life in 1968; she succumbed to ravages of water and air pollution. The president today, Seven Sisters Oak (since 1968), with her 38-foot waistline, is thought to be 1,200 years old. Other society officers boasts four vice presidents whose names and waistlines are: First Vice President: Middleton Oak (31feet) ; 2nd Vice President: St. John Cathedral Oak (27 feet); 3rd Vice President: Lagarde (29 feet), and 4th Vice President: Martha Washington Oak, who measures in at 28 feet.

Four of the five tree officers are from Louisiana — Louisiana has the most registered members, but Mississippi, North and South Carolina as well as Alabama and Georgia have all made sure their oak debutantes have made the society. The one human part of the Live Oak Society is Mrs. Coleen Landry of Louisiana. Membership rules are stringent. Like an applicant for a Miss America pageant, the oak must have certain waist and height measurements. To be admitted to the society, experts determine that an oak applicant must have a minimum girth (circumference of trunk) of 8 feet. An astounding 96-inch waist! What we would call, back in the day, "a stout gal." Younger tree members, known as the Junior Leaguers, have a girth of 8 to 16 feet. The Centenarians must measure a waist exceeding 16 feet. (Do they call these sustainers?)

Wilmington's Airlie Oak dates back to around 1545, according to Janine Powell of Airlie Gardens, and she (the oak, not Janine) is not a member of the Live Oak Society based in Louisiana. She is approximately 460 years old with a 21-plus-foot waist when last officially measured by the N.C Forest Service.

The Airlie Oak does hold a title, however. She is the North Carolina state champion live oak. Her competition for the crown is unknown, but she stands serenely on the banks of Bradley Creek in Wilmington, surrounded by her younger sister oaks.

Stories hold that Pembroke Jones is said to have been the Jones of the "Keeping up with the Joneses" cliche. He held elegant dinner parties up in the mossy branches of the ancient live oaks. No photographs exist of these tree dinners, where dinner guests were served seated on platforms in the live oaks overlooking the creek. But a few years ago, an anonymous benefactor sent several handsome guest books from Airlie with signatures and comments of its visitors. Written snippets mention the treetop dinners served on tables on platforms nestled in the branches of the leafy giants and confirm the legend as fact!

Pembroke Jones' guest book is now with the Cape Fear Museum, where familiar names from the Wilmington past are interspersed with pencil-and-ink drawings by the guests: A mega fish covers two pages of

the oversize book. On another page, a battleship is carefully sketched next to a 1918 entry, in which a guest writes about its predicted prowess if it goes to battle in World War I. The collection includes lots of loose photographs of unknown guests meandering through the gardens or chatting on the banks of Bradley Creek, laughing at some lost joke on the steps of the porch. (Note to readers: Always record the "who, when and where" on the back of all of your photographs. Otherwise, in years to come, the ghostly, unidentified images from the past will remain just that . . . ghosts.)

A few weeks ago, with historian Chris Fonvielle as our intrepid leader, our *Salt* senior editor Bill Irvine, writer John Wolfe and I struck out on a field trip through Old Town Plantation to look for local oak specimens. We drove past a tackle (as they call these tar kilns) indention in the ground, which Chris explained to us was an abandoned homemade pit. The pit was lined with clay where pine trees are burned to capture their resin to make tar. Tar is an essential for naval stores to waterproof wooden ships.

As our group ventured farther in, the live oak presence became the predominant forest. Some giants were out in the open, sentinel trees they are called because travelers use them to find directions. We circled the first mega-oak, which had been in front of a long-lost house in some previous lifetime. Now it stands on the edge of an exhausted and withered cornfield, empty of the feed used for the hunting fields. The tree is majestic and we measured it as about "17 feet circumference and change," as John said. A mere teenager when compared to the dames in the Live Oak Society, whose president's waist was better than twice our gal's.

But this tree was endowed enough to be a "Junior Leaguer" member. Her 17 feet proved her eligibility according to Live Oak Society's standards, and we were proud. Her spreading branches were gnarled and impressive; she seemed to preen over her bare open space. We even found shards of pottery and china nearby in the dirt road, which must have been from the long-gone house some distance back. Chris found a fragment of black glass bottle, a bottle that may have been opened to pour a glass of port or homemade wine to celebrate a New Year in 18th-century Colonial Carolina.

Down the road was another towering oak with a surprise beneath her branches: a giant circle of recumbent and sitting dog statues surrounding the outer branches of the tree. Through the years, the property owners had had a succession of Labrador retrievers and this was their final resting place, marked with these stone images. Serene under their magnificent oak, they seem to patiently wait for the return of their owner.

At last we came to a secluded grove of live oaks that was as hushed and beautiful as any sanctuary. No sentinel oak here. The oaks gathered as a mute congregation, dappling the ground beneath them. It was a fitting end to our excursion as we stood in the silence of these giants.

Jim Batey has a sprawling live oak farm right here on Aspen Road in Castle Hayne. He showed me the spread, which is home to more than 3,000 live oaks of varying ages for customers to choose from. You can wander among the young trees to decide which one speaks to you and — trust me — one will call your name. Some are in the ground and have to be spaded to move to your location; others come in a tublike mesh container, to be lifted onto a truck for transport, delivery and installation.

I met all the tree farm critters too: a mouser who appeared and stayed, a rescue dog of undetermined ancestry named Charlie and his most unlikely farmhand — an enormous pig named Melvin for the BBQ restaurant in Charleston. Melvin has an incredible back story . . . Charles Dickens would have wept with envy.

After hurricanes Fran and Floyd, Jim was helping out a friend on a flooded hog farm near Savannah. Down one of the trenches floated a huge corpse of a hog, victim of the flood. But clinging to his mother was a tiny piglet no bigger than a teacup. Today Melvin lives the good life in his pen on the live oak farm after that traumatic rescue. He is a friendly, happy 400-pound soul, showing no signs of PTSD from his harrowing beginning. Some pig!

Jim has the largest operation of the kind in this part of the South. He says when the city buys his trees, they always select those with slim, straight trunks for planting on city streets. Reason for their shape: no sprawling branches inviting children or overserved partygoers easy access to a climb.

Jim's colorful past includes owning and restoring a lighthouse called Bloody Point by the Native Americans; owning and operating a boat that ferried passengers from the mainland near Beaufort, S.C. (that's BEW-fort down there, not like our BO-fort in North Carolina), to Dafuskie Island of Pat Conroy fame. Read the *Water Is Wide* by Pat, a riveting tale of Conroy's first and last job teaching school on the isolated and primitive island. Jim Batey — as the mailman, ferryman, grocery deliverer — knew Conroy. So being Southerners, we were compelled to swap Conroy stories before returning to the live oak agenda.

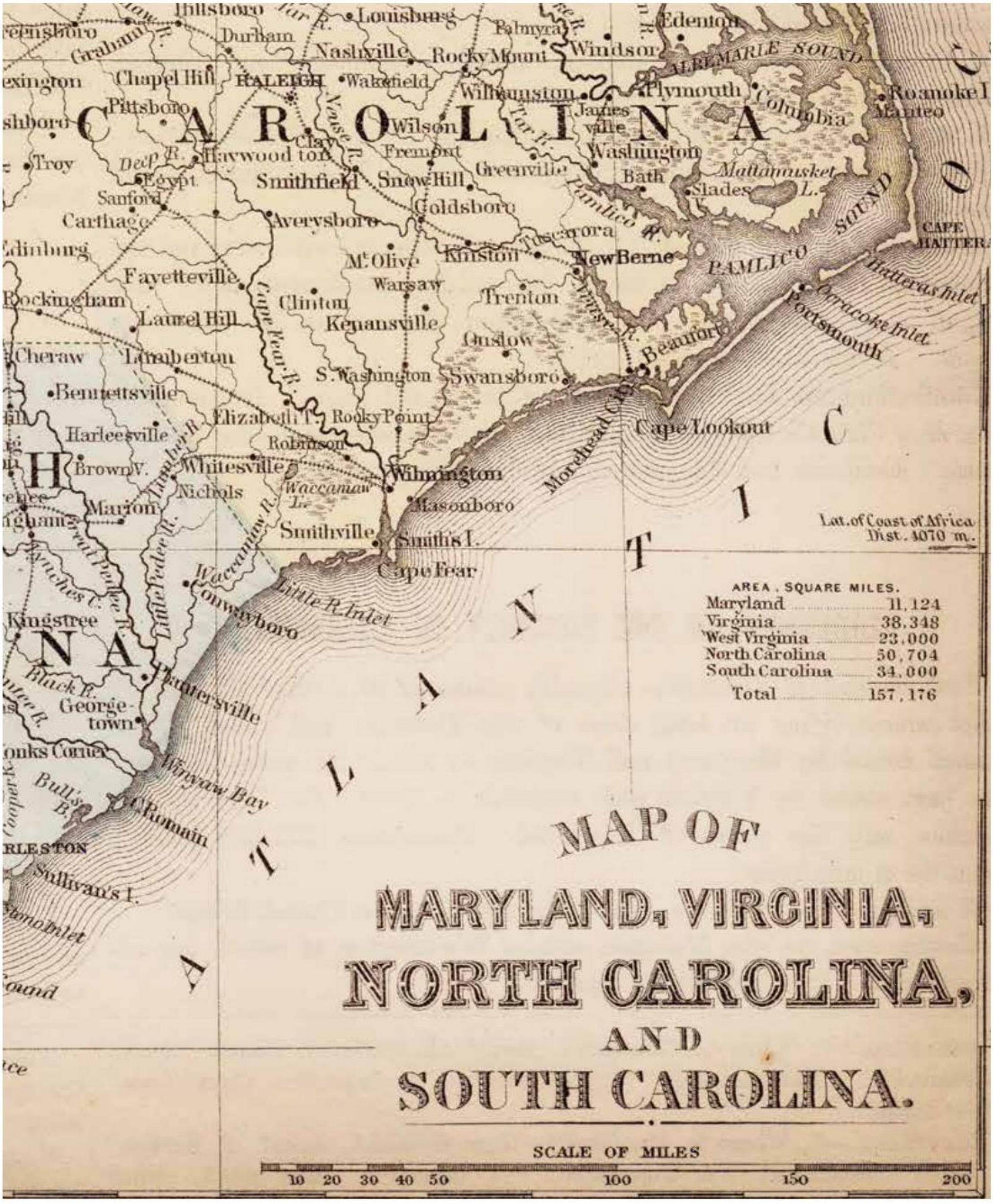
Many oaks are celebrities on their home turf. The Angel Oak with those ground-hugging branches is a tourist attraction there in South Carolina. Here we have the Airlie Oak, and a favorite of mine, the big oak at Jackson's Big Oak BBQ, is a stand-out. Even my street has a giant unnamed oak, near its entrance in the yard of an antebellum house overlooking the Intracoastal Waterway. Like the vanished Airlie Dinner platforms, this oak has a platform in its ancient arms, benches there, and a wrought-iron spiral staircase to climb. Festooned with Spanish moss, it seems almost a prop to our Low Country with its view overlooking the waterway.

And who knew that Walt Whitman ventured south and stayed long enough to write a sheath of poems to our Southern part of the world? And to the live oak in particular . . . And it is so reflective of his view of the world.

I saw in Louisiana a live-oak growing,
All alone stood it and the moss hung down from the branches,
Without any companion it grew there uttering joyous leaves of dark green,
And its look, rude, unbending, lusty, made me think of myself . . .

Ah, Walt . . . so predictably self-absorbed. Even the enormous *Quercus virginiana* stands in the shadow of the poet. But that unruly ego aside, the poem is a shout-out for the magnificent Southern live oak... that moss-draped giant of a tree. And she is ours, the most iconic object of our arboreal obsession.

Nan Graham is a regular Salt *contributor and has been a local NPR commentator since 1995.*


MAP OF
MARYLAND, VIRGINIA,
NORTH CAROLINA,
AND
SOUTH CAROLINA.
CAROLINA
ATLANTIC
Hillsboro
Louisburg
Edenton
Durham
Nashville
Rocky Mount
Windsor
Chapel Hill
RALEIGH
Wakefield
Williamston
Plymouth
Roanoke I
Pittsboro
Wilson
Jamesville
Columbia
Manteo
Clay
Fremont
Washington
Haywood ton
Greenville
Troy
Egypt
Smithfield
Snow Hill
Bath
Slades
Mattamuskett L.
Sanford
Goldsboro
SOUND
Carthage
Averysboro
Tuscarora
CAPE HATTERAS
Edinburg
Kinston
New Berne
PAMLICO
Mt. Olive
Fayetteville
Warsaw
Hatteras Inlet
Rockingham
Clinton
Trenton
Ocracoke Inlet
Laurel Hill
Kenansville
Portsmouth
Onslow
Cheraw
Lumberton
Beaufort
S. Washington
Swansboro
Bennettsville
Elizabeth T.
Rocky Point
Cape Lookout
Harleesville
Robinson
Brown V.
Whiteville
Wilmington
Nichols
Waccamaw L.
Mason boro
Marion
Smithville
Smith's I.
Cape Fear
Conwayboro
Little R. Inlet
Kingstree
Black R.
Georgetown
Pedee R.
Waccamaw R.
Lumber R.
Little Pedee R.
Waccamaw Bay
Bull's B.
Romain
Sullivan's I.
Lat. of Coast of Africa
Dist. 4070 m.
AREA, SQUARE MILES.
Maryland 11,124
Virginia 38,348
West Virginia 23,000
North Carolina 50,704
South Carolina 34,000
Total 157,176
SCALE OF MILES
10 20 30 40 50 100 150 200

Silent Running

Englishman Thomas Taylor's adventures on the blockade runner Banshee offer a glimpse into the life of a Civil War thrill-seeker

By Kevin Maurer

It was a moonless night. Dark, but clear. Thomas Taylor searched the inky blackness from the deck of his blockade runner for any sign of a Union vessel.

It was 1863 and the blockade runner Banshee skirted the North Carolina coast as it approached the mouth of the Cape Fear River. The ship, with two steam-driven paddles, was part of a loose collection of blockade runners keeping the Confederacy alive.

Almost 200 blockade runners made it to Confederate ports in 1863. The next year, 244 made it to port, according to R. Thomas Campbell in *Last of the Gray Phantoms: The Confederate Blockade Runners.*

Taylor was an Englishman employed by Liverpool merchants to act as the supercargo or the owner's representative on the Banshee. Taylor captured his adventures in an 1896 book. His book, *Running the Blockade*, offers a glimpse of Civil War-era Wilmington and the importance of Fort Fisher as the protector of the Confederacy's blockade-running fleet.

Taylor admits early in the book he and other blockade runners were thrill-seekers and adventurers paid handsomely to defy the blockade, not true believers in the Confederate cause.

"Nothing I have ever experienced can compare with it," Taylor said. "Hunting, pig-sticking, steeple-chasing, big-game shooting, polo — I have done a little of each — all have their thrilling moments, but none can approach running a blockade."

The English-owned Banshee — the first steel-hulled ship to cross the Atlantic — was built specifically for blockade running. An 1863 *New York Times* story described the Banshee as a rakish-looking craft, with two pipes: "She sits low in the water, and neither her masts nor any other part of her rises high enough above the water to be seen at a distance, and everything about her seems neat and symmetrical. Like all the other vessels which come from England, she was black on her arrival, but was quickly painted lead color."

As the Banshee approached the mouth of the Cape Fear, Taylor was joined on the bridge by Jonathan W. Steele, a daring sea captain who believed himself immune from arrest if caught because he was a British citizen, and the ship's pilot, Tom Burroughs, a Wilmington man who had a sixth sense for spotting blockaders.

Vessels were frequently lost because the pilot lost his nerve or didn't know his precise location. According to Taylor, Burroughs was a legend.

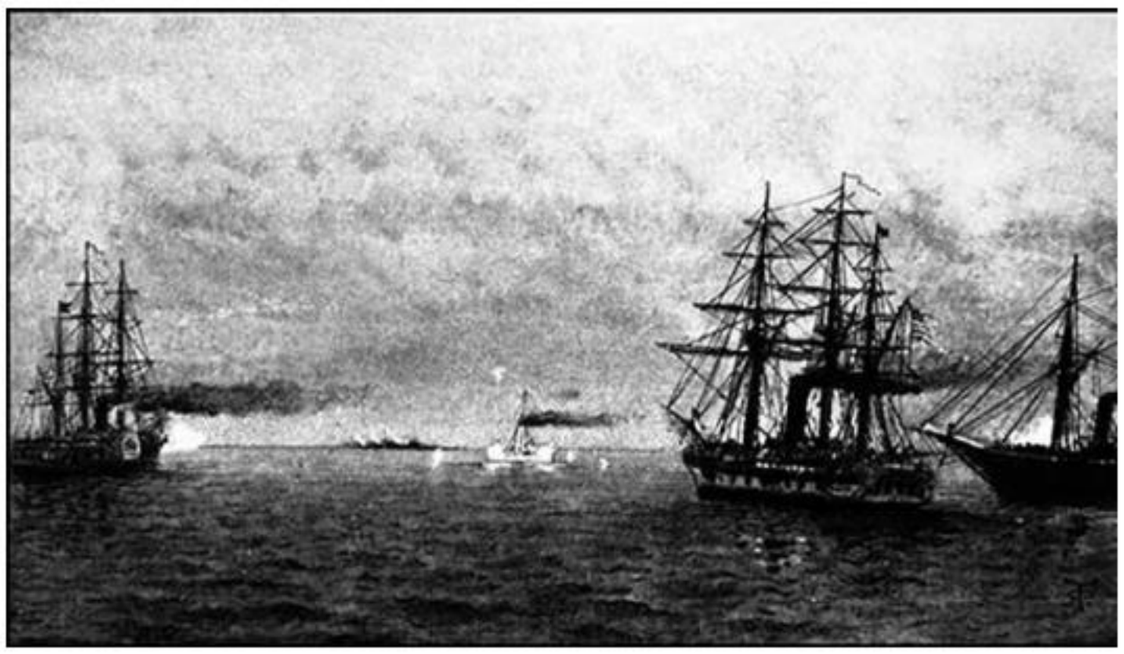
"He knew his port like his own face, and the most trying situations or heaviest firing could never put him off or disturb his serene self-possession," Taylor wrote about him. "For all his duties he had an instinct that approached genius. On the blackest night he could always make out a blockader several minutes before anyone else."

The rest of the crew was crouched next to the ship's bulwarks scanning the black for signs of Union blockade ships. The hatchways were covered by tarpaulins. No one even lit a cigar. Crew members spoke in whispers. Any sound or light could betray their location.

Running the Union blockage off the coast of North Carolina was delicate work. If the ship was discovered, the Union Navy would imprison the crew and seize the ship and its cargo. Each stroke of the engine and beat of the paddle against the Atlantic Ocean waters put the Banshee crew on edge.

"Better get a cast of the lead, Captain," Burroughs said to Steele.

The captain grabbed the tube leading to the engine and ordered the engines stopped. Everyone his their breath hoping the engines wouldn't blow off steam after being stopped abruptly.



"That would have been enough to betray our presence for miles around," Taylor wrote years later.

A crew member measured the depth of the water from the bow of the ship and reported to the bridge.

"Sixteen fathoms — sandy bottom with black specks."

Burroughs heard the report and knew his exact location off the North Carolina coast.

"We are not as far in as I thought, Captain," he said, "and we are too far to the southward. Port two points and go a little faster."

The blockade was set up in cordons. An in-shore squadron of gunboats anchored during the day, but patrolled at night from shore to shore at the mouth of the river. They could signal to a second cordon of cruisers off shore ready to chase the blockade runners once they cleared the bar. A third cordon of cruisers patrolled the Gulf Stream.

The plan was to sail north of Wilmington and the mouth of the Cape Fear River and then double back along the coast in order to elude the outer ring of the blockade. After sailing along the coast for another hour, the Banshee made the turn.

"Starboard and go ahead easy," Burroughs said.

Burroughs was known for spotting blockaders before anyone else. The ship crawled along the blacked-out shoreline, its paddles slowly beating the water. Everyone had fallen into the rhythm of the paddle and the engine, when suddenly Burroughs grabbed Taylor's arm.

"There's one of them, Mr. Taylor," he whispered, "on the starboard bow."

Taylor strained his eyes searching the blackness for a sign of the Union ship.

"All right, Burroughs, I see her," Steele said. "Starboard a little, steady!"

As the ship turned, Taylor finally made out the ship. It was "a long, low black object on our starboard side, lying perfectly still." The Banshee snuck by the blockade ship, coming within 100 yards. Once past the ship, Burroughs spotted another.

"Steamer on the port bow."

"Hard-a-port," said Steele.

Burroughs spun the wheel and the Banshee turned, avoiding the Union cruiser. Then out of the gloom was a third Union ship. The ship was sailing across the Banshee's bow.

"Stop her," said Steele.

The paddles stopped and the Banshee sat dead in the water.

"It was clear there was a false reckoning somewhere, and that instead of rounding the head of the blockading line we were passing through the very centre of it," he wrote.

There was no choice but to press on. Burroughs told Taylor and Steele the Banshee was likely inside the squadron guarding the mouth of the river.

"Slow ahead," Steele ordered as the ship continued forward.

Soon the coast came into view. Taylor could see the white foam of the surf. But he could also see the first glimmer of light on the horizon as it was near dawn. Burroughs turned and the Banshee skirted the surf until he spotted "the Big Hill." The hill was really Fort Fisher's Mound Battery. It provided the initial point to navigate into New Inlet, and at night, it served as a lighthouse.

Daylight was already breaking. Taylor could make out a half-dozen Union gunboats ahead. Steam shot out of their stacks as they started toward the Banshee.

BOOM.

The gunboats opened fire. Shells splashed around the Banshee.

"An unpleasant sensation when you know you have several tons of gunpowder under your feet," Taylor wrote.

As the Banshee raced for the mouth of the river, Union gunboats pursued. Then Taylor saw a flash from shore, followed by the boom of a cannon.

A shell whistled over his head.

"It was Fort Fisher, wide awake and warning the gunboats to keep their distance," Taylor wrote. "With a parting broadside they steamed sulkily out of range, and in half an hour we were safely over the bar."

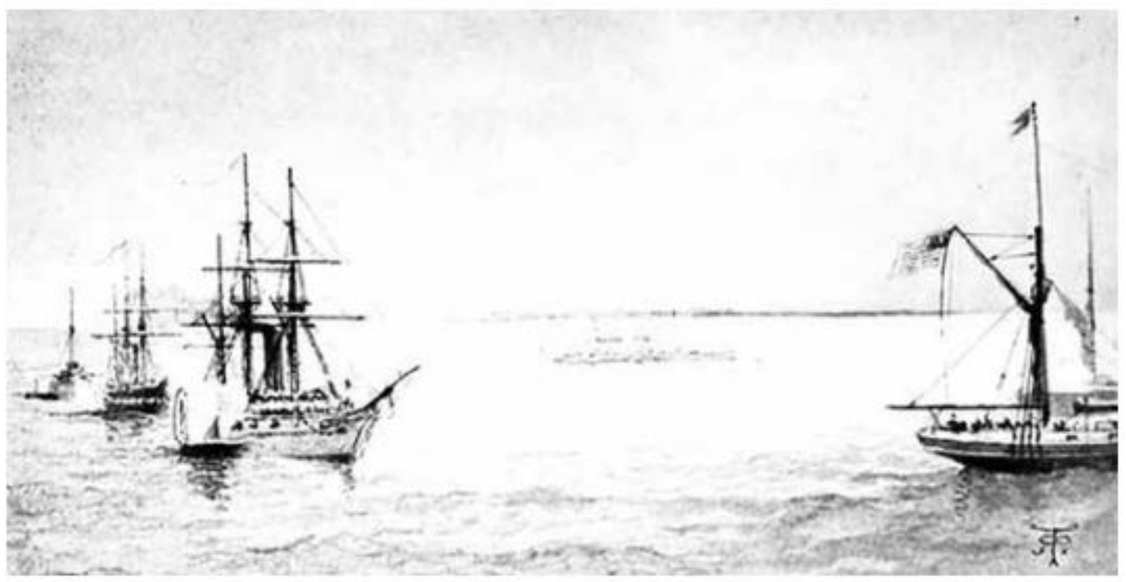
The fort stood like a sentinel at the mouth of the river, offering cover to the blockade runners seeking refuge from the blockaders. The fort continued to protect the Cape Fear until January 1865. The fall of Fort Fisher closed the port of Wilmington and was a harbinger of the defeat of the Confederacy.

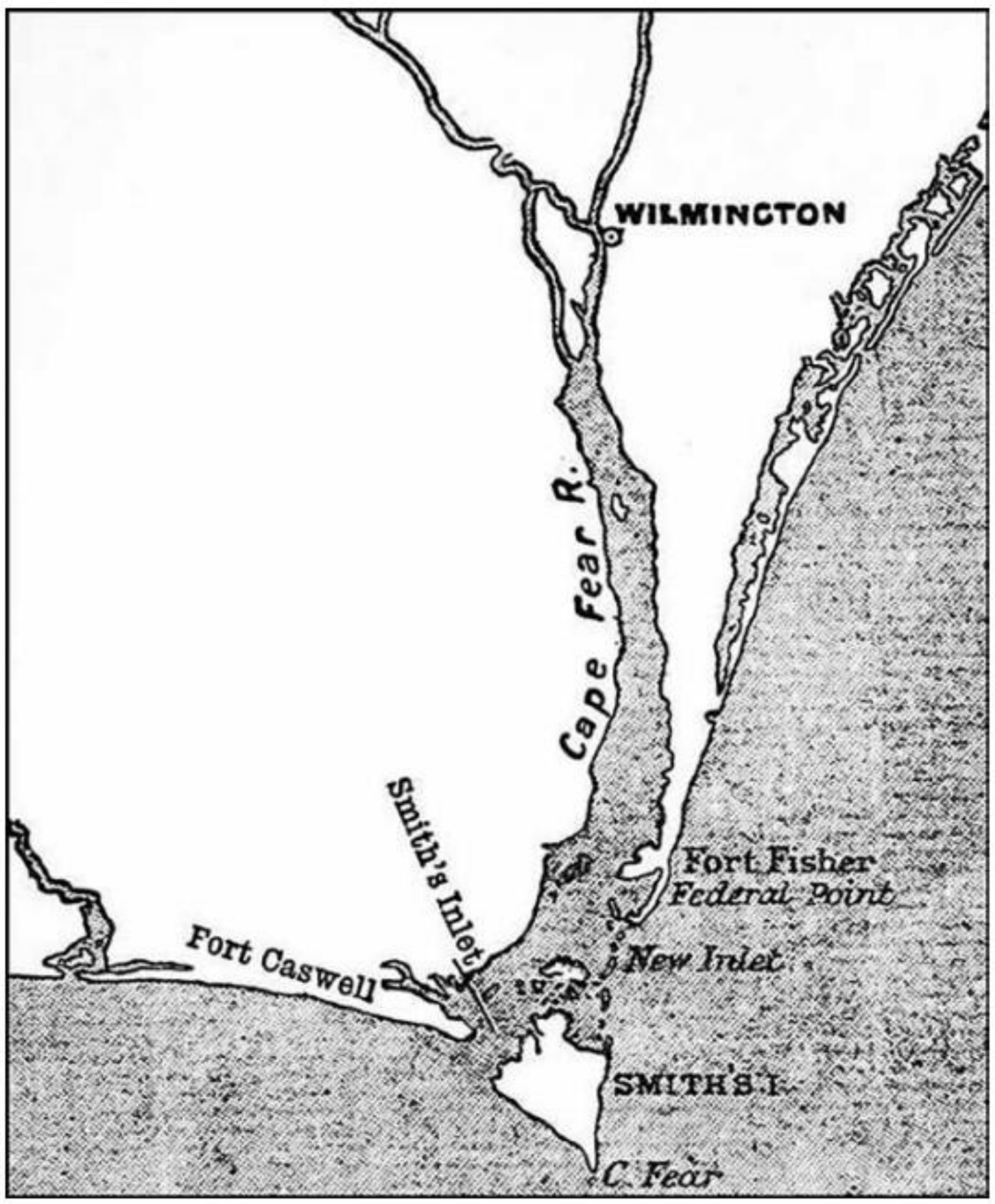
After clearing quarantine and navigating the Cape Fear River, the Banshee headed for Wilmington. The city was the main point of entry for goods to the Confederate States. Cotton and tobacco were traded for guns, metals, gunpowder and clothing. The goods were taken from the port to railcars and sent throughout the South.

Besides supplies, the ships brought foreign crews, who spent money in the city's bars and hotels. Wilmington was an international city during the war.

But Taylor was not impressed with what he saw upon arrival.

"Wilmington was already sadly pinched and war-worn," Taylor said. "There never was too much to eat and drink there, and the commonest luxuries were almost things of the past."





The ship's return cargo of cotton was waiting at the dock, and slaves quickly unloaded the gunpowder and other contraband and reloaded the Banshee's holds with tobacco and stacked three tiers of cotton on the deck.

"Everything had to be done at high pressure, for it was important to get out as quickly as possible, so as to try another run while the dark nights lasted, and loading went merrily on," Taylor wrote.

To earn some goodwill with local officials, Taylor opened the ship's doors for lunch. When the lunch bell rang, Taylor said the cabin filled up. It got so crowded, they had overflow seating.

"What a pleasure it was to see them eat and drink!" Taylor writes. "Men who had been accustomed to live on corn-bread and bacon, and to drink nothing but water, appreciated our delicacies; our bottled beer, good brandy, and, on great occasions, our champagne, warmed their hearts towards us."

They fed so many people, the chief steward's stores were almost bare by the time the Banshee returned to Nassau. But the luncheons worked and Taylor said when he needed a favor, he got it.

A few days after arriving, the Banshee set off down the river and toward Nassau. Steele and Taylor devised a plan to escape the blockade.

"The flagship during the night remained at anchor, while the other ships moved slowly to and fro upon the inner line, leaving, as was natural enough, a small area round the Admiral's ship unpatrolled. This was enough for us."

The Banshee stopped at Fort Fisher. Taylor and Steele rowed ashore to get the exact position of the Union blockaders and get a bead on the flagship — USS Minnesota, a large 60-gun frigate. At nightfall, the Banshee slipped over the bar and headed straight for the USS Minnesota. Passing near the flagship, they escaped the first cordon.

But as the Banshee hit the second cordon, a gunboat spotted the Banshee and fired. Steele ordered full speed from the engines and Burroughs threw the wheel hard over. The Banshee zigzagged away from the slower gunboat. Once they'd put some distance between the vessels, Steele ordered the Banshee to stop.

"As we lay perfectly still, watching the course of the gunboat by the flashes of her guns and by the rockets she was sending up to attract her consorts, we had the satisfaction of seeing her laboring furiously past us and firing wildly into black space," Taylor wrote.

The Banshee set course for Nassau, spending the next three days running from every sail and patch of smoke on the horizon until they steamed into the harbor on the evening of the third day.

"For my part, I was mightily proud of my first attempt and my baptism of fire," Taylor said. "Blockade-running seemed the pleasantest and most exhilarating of pastimes."

Taylor made seven more trips on the Banshee before moving on to other ships. The Banshee was captured en route to Wilmington by the USS Grand Gulf and the Fulton, a transport, on its ninth trip, after a long chase off Cape Hatteras. Steele and the crew were imprisoned and the ship was sold to the Navy and turned into a gunboat.

"We heard afterwards that she had proved anything but a success, being much too tender," Taylor wrote about the ship's service with the U.S. Navy.

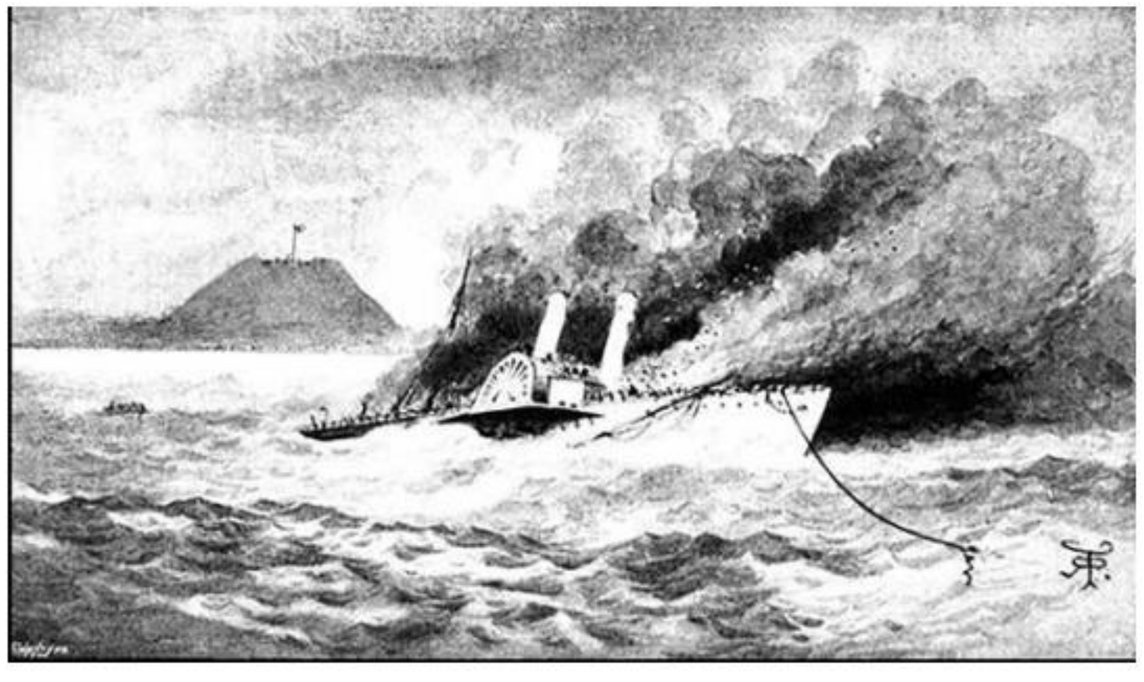
When Steele was eventually released because he was a British citizen, he returned to Nassau and took command of a new blockade runner built for him.

Steele christened it Banshee No. 2.

Taylor's career didn't end with the Banshee. He continued to run several ships and made trips to Wilmington and one to Galveston before the end of the war. He returned to England to a quiet life, but it didn't stick.

"In a few months I found myself bound for India as a partner in the house in Bombay," he wrote at the end of the book. "With quite a different life to look forward to."

Kevin Maurer is an award-winning journalist who lives in Wilmington. His latest book is American Radical: Inside the World of an Undercover Muslim FBI Agent.



The Revolution Awaits

Becoming the Uncarved Block

Artist Nathan Verwey has big plans for the "Art of Our Time"

Story & Photograph
By John Wolfe

King James

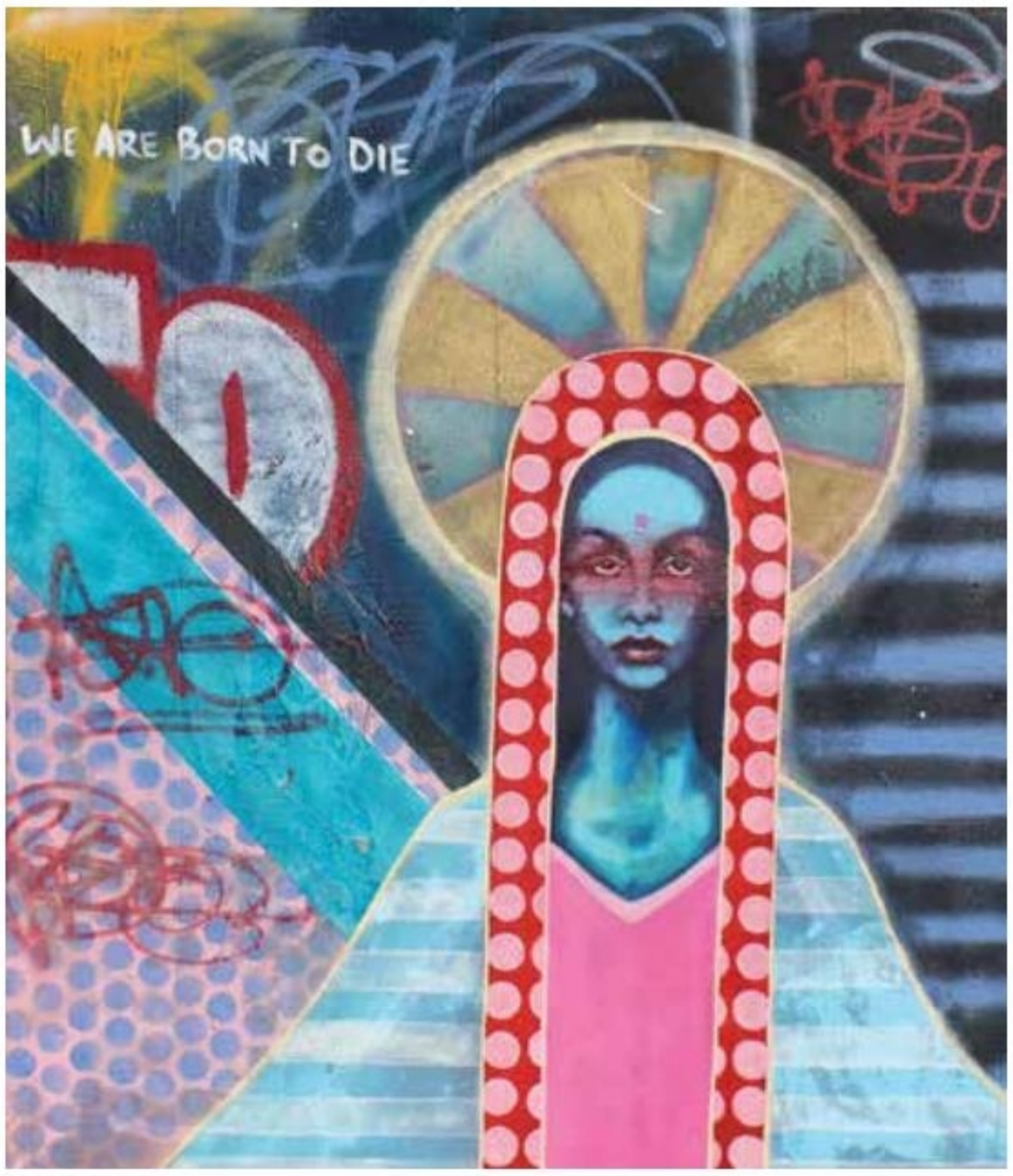
Praying for the Rain

DISCLAIMER

Before I get too involved in describing how Nathan Verwey makes art, remember the opening lines of the Tao Te Ching: "The way that can be spoken of is not the true way; the name that can be named is not the constant name." It would be difficult, if not impossible, to capture in words what Nathan does using paint, because it's like taking a still photograph of a child at play — you might succeed in getting an angle of it, but the actual act is alive, and so different from moment to moment that each iteration is a unique thing. That's almost the whole point.

THE ARTIST HIMSELF

Verwey is tall, dark and handsome with a hint of danger, a man with the appeal of a jaguar, with a plume of umber hair above deep brown eyes and worn Converse All-Stars. He's from Wisconsin, originally, and came to Wilmington to pursue acting in 2007. That's when he started painting, using an easel kit his father gave him as a Christmas gift. He "got serious" about painting five years later, the first time he painted on a wall that the public would actually see. But he's



We are Born to Die

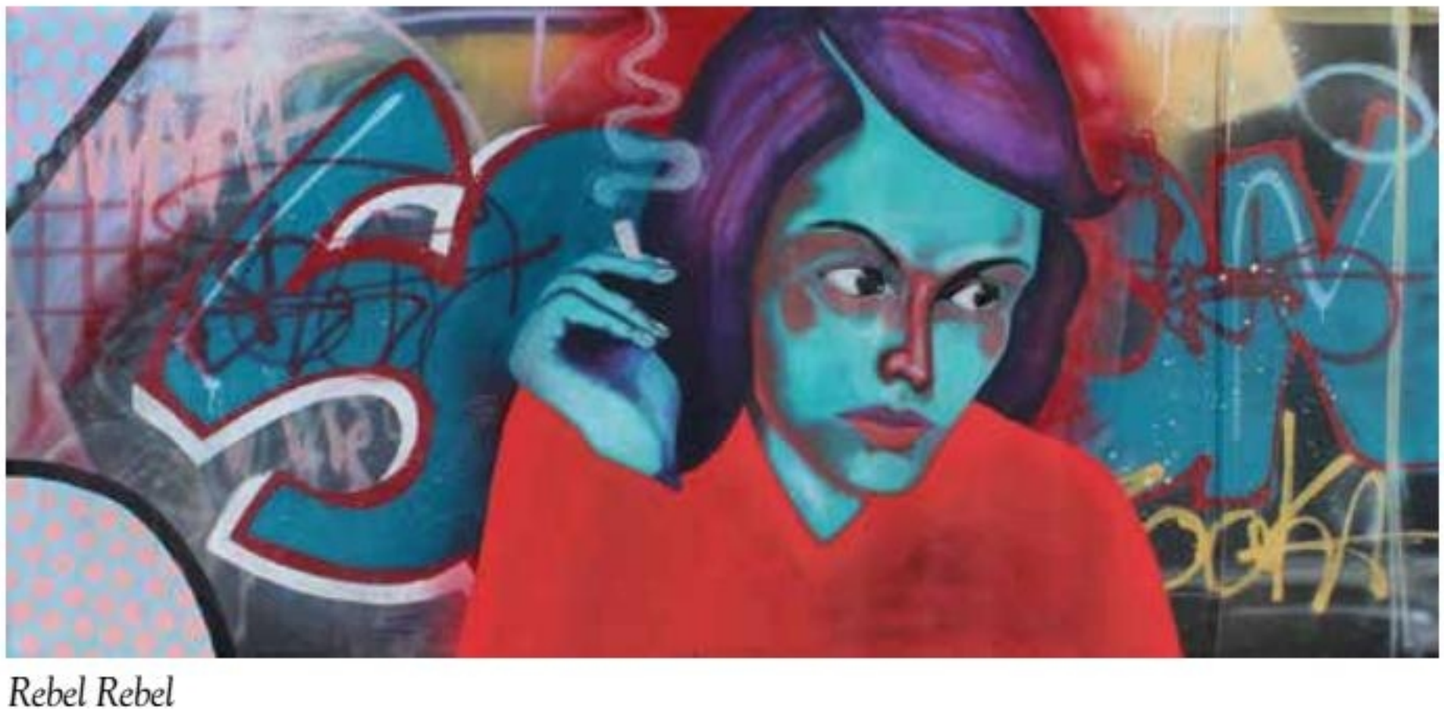
Standing in a Wildfire

been a creator for as long as he can remember. For him, creation is a space of peace and stillness, somewhere he can escape his own constantly racing mind. He is a happier person when he works every day.

THE WORK

He works like a miner following a vein of gold through a rocky outcrop. When he finds a thread, he pursues it until it has run its course; by then, he might have stumbled across something else, so he'll go sideways for a while and follow that thread. But it always leads him back to where he began, he says: "Everything in life is a cycle." He sees himself not as a maker of the things he creates, but as a conduit that allows them to happen.

Like Picasso said, artists are the best truthful liars. We are drinking coffee and talking about René Magritte's *The Treachery of Images*, a painting of a pipe with the caption, "This is not a pipe," in French. "An artist's job," Verwey says, "is to be truthful to themselves, and speak to that nature. Even though it's going to be a lie, regardless of whether it's a truth or not," to be "unabridged and honest," which is "a terrifying thing to do." Artists, according to Verwey, "create energy and store it inside something until somebody else comes across it." When a piece connects the artist and audience, causing synapses to fire sympathetically from an exchange of thought, that is what Verwey considers success.



Rebel Rebel

Seeking Truth

New Man

Princess Die

THE CONTEXT

He wants to paint a mural on a five-story building. He loves working big. When he paints a mural he feels like a bird; the passage of time is both real and irrelevant. He loves how art on the street already has an intrinsic juxtaposition — bright colors amid the grit — and how it's on display for no cost 24/7 (with no holidays), accessible to all. Street art is "the art of our time," he feels. An artist can paint a masterpiece on a wall — something that ought to hang in a quiet gallery — and weather and time will take it away. To take it so seriously is silly, he thinks. Art is ephemeral. To frame it, to preserve it, to worship it, is to keep a butterfly in a cage, to lock up something that was intended to beat as freely and finitely as our own hearts. To quote the Tao, again: "It is because it never attempts itself in being great that it succeeds in becoming great."

John Wolfe studied creative nonfiction at UNCW. He can be found online at www.thewriterjohnwolfe.com.

A Winning Collective

Largely by word of mouth, a remarkable group of philanthopy-minded women are making things happen one smart grant at a time

By Virginia Holman

Photographs by Mallory Cash

Philanthropy. It's one of those words that you often see alongside words like symphony, museum, gala, benefactor or billionaire. Not many people think of themselves as philanthropists, but here in Wilmington, the Women's Impact Network has created an accessible and appealing model of philanthropy that is thriving and creating lasting value within our community.

Since 2011 the Women's Impact Network, or WIN, has been quietly creating a dynamic and diverse group of women philanthropists in Wilmington who have joined forces to create a collective giving circle. This group, which has formed largely by word of mouth, has awarded $259,000 in grants to nonprofits in New Hanover County.

Membership chair Carol Kennedy says that WIN is unique in the area: "Our purpose is twofold: WIN strives to educate our members about the needs of the community and then, through collective giving, we provide annual grants to area nonprofits."

How does collective giving work? Well, have you ever donated money to a favorite cause when you know your donation will be matched? You know, say you donate $100 to WHQR and *voila*, a wealthy benefactor or corporation matches your gift dollar-for-dollar. WHQR gets $200, and you feel doubly virtuous. Now imagine making a donation to a local nonprofit where your contribution is matched, say, 125-fold. That's exactly what happens when you join the Women's Impact Network, which currently has about 125 members.

WIN began in 2011 with a small group of about 20 founding members. In a year, that number doubled. The model of collective giving proved effective and potent. Their very first year in operation, WIN was able to give a $25,000 educational grant to the Guardian Ad Litem Foundation to provide tutoring for children who were in the custody of the Department of Social Services. I recently sat down with six WIN members to find out more about how the group came to be and what the future holds.

Two of WIN's founders, Laurie Taylor, vice president of development for Lower Cape Fear Hospice, and Donis Smith, vice president of Wealth Management at UBS, both emphasize that when the group first invited grant applications from area nonprofits, the group learned about needs that exist within the community that they wouldn't have discovered any other way.

"Initially, when we founded WIN, we discussed offering one large grant that would have a big impact," says Taylor. "But we also recognize that we need to award grant amounts that will be sustainable for those nonprofits in the future." So instead of routinely offering one grant of $50,000 or more, they instead provide organizations the chance to apply for two large grants in the $25,000 range, as well as several smaller grants of less than $7,500.

Left to right: Ericca Burke, Donis Smith, Melodie Homer, Maureen Vasquez, Elyssa Miller, Laurie Taylor

Smith noted that as WIN's membership grew, funding areas expanded as well to accommodate a broader range of issues. Each year, the organization solicits grants that focus on one of its four areas of interest: the environment, health and wellness, education, and arts and culture. 2018 grants focused on education; 2019 will focus on health and wellness.

Ericca Burke, owner of Haven Acupuncture and Chinese Medicine, says that "because WIN members donate our money to the collective, we don't have to spend time or resources on fundraising." Rather, WIN members contribute their time to decide how to allocate their resources to worthy nonprofit applicants. Each year, the members read and vote on the grant finalists. Each member has a vote. "When I read all the grant applications this year, it opened my eyes to some of the places in Wilmington that are in need," says Burke. "Reading the grant applications made me see how many things our family might be able to volunteer with and assist with in addition to WIN."

Though WIN's main mission is to support the community, it has also created a community of engaged philanthropists who are often people outside their usual circles. "Typical relationships are homogenous," says Smith. "They are the people in your neighborhood, your church, your office, friends that have similar interests to you. Being in WIN, however, allows you to meet philanthropic women of different ages, backgrounds and professions. It's definitely not homogeneous."

Author, nurse and nonprofit foundation president Melodie Homer agrees. When she first moved to Wilmington, not only did WIN allow her to quickly get a solid overview of the nonprofits in the area — which was important because she founded and runs a nonprofit of her own — "but through WIN I have met women whom I wouldn't have met otherwise, and I've become familiar with agencies that it might have otherwise taken me years to discover."

WIN members are quick to emphasize that it's not a social club, though its members do come together quarterly "with a little wine and networking" to learn more about nonprofits in the Wilmington community. Kennedy says that members who want to engage with others often choose to serve on WIN's committees that focus on education, communications, large grants, small grants and membership. "The great thing about WIN is that you can be as involved as you want to be without ever feeling pressured to take on duties beyond your membership," she says.

Entrepreneur Maureen Vasquez agrees. When she joined WIN, her calendar was full. "I wanted to have a big impact, but I didn't have a lot of additional time to volunteer. I knew with WIN that instead of writing a little check here and there, I could write a check and be confident that my contribution was going to wind up making a larger impact in the community." As WIN helped her learn more about the essential contributions of nonprofits throughout Wilmington, she enthusiastically joined the grants committee so that she could become more involved. "There's so much happening in Wilmington. Obviously, WIN can't fund every grant proposal, but by serving on the grants committee, I discovered nonprofits with missions that I can support outside of WIN," says Vasquez.

WIN has also caught the imagination of a new generation of philanthropists. Elyssa Miller, innovation associate at Tek Mountain, says that "my generation, millennials, are skeptical of traditional philanthropy," but that she found WIN's methods particularly appealing. "WIN is progressive in its collective giving model. If I donate $600 to a nonprofit organization, well, that's great," she says, "but by joining WIN my $600 is matched so that an organization can receive, say, $25,000," then that allows her to participate in philanthropy at a level that is "life-changing, potentially." Miller also likes that WIN emphasizes accountability. Grant recipients return and make presentations about how their awards helped their organizations. She says it's also encouraging to the grants used to establish ongoing programs, but that would have been difficult to launch without WIN's support.

Smith says that she'd "like to see more collective giving groups form in Wilmington." Taylor agrees, and points out that giving as part of a collective helps engrain philanthropy as a habit. "A lot of people want to give in a way that has impact," says Taylor, "but they don't know who to give to or aren't sure how to give effectively. WIN has brought women together in the act of giving, and it makes a big difference to New Hanover County and to us." In other words, it's a win-win.

WIN's Enduring Impact

Cape Fear Guardian Ad Litem Association (2011)

Isabella Hinds, President

The Cape Fear Guardian Ad Litem Association began nearly 20 years ago with a small group of guardians ad litem, trained adult volunteers who represent the interests of children in court, most of whom are in the care of the Department of Social Services. The guardians began to see that many of the children they represented had a burning desire to have dance lessons or music lessons; the cost of those experiences seemed so modest and the impact so great that the guardians got together and founded CFGALA, a nonprofit separate from the state Guardian Ad Litem program in order to make such experiences possible for children in DSS custody. President Isabella Hinds also points out that CFGALA's focus is to provide activities that enhance child development, self-esteem and resilience, which Hinds says is the element that's essential in helping children survive being in DSS custody.

"When we applied for the WIN grant in 2011, CFGALA needed resources to expand an important area, which is tutoring," says Hinds, and points out that tutoring is expensive, individualized, and usually extends through an entire school year. Since the program began, Hinds says that about half the children served by Guardian Ad Litem in New Hanover County and Pender are in "kinship care." That is, they are placed with a relative, in which case the fostering family receives no stipend to assist with the additional expense of supporting the child, and many of these families are of limited means. When students get funds from CFGALA for tutoring, it can change lives and improve the odds for future success. According to one year-end report, a 9-year-old boy who was in custody for an extended period initially reported feelings of "isolation and anger due to his poor performance in schools"; he now says tutoring has helped him realize he can improve, and that realization has improved his attitude and his motivation.

"The WIN grant gave CFGALA the financial courage to expand into this critical area, and it's made such a difference in the lives of these children," says Hinds. The program has proved so successful that CFGALA was able to expand the program with ongoing help

Left to right: Yasmin Tomkinson, Isabella Hinds, Marsha Graham-Ali

from the Eshelman Foundation. The Guardian Ad Litem Association was the first nonprofit to receive a grant from WIN.

Juneteenth (2017)

Marsha Graham-Ali, Chairman

Juneteenth is the celebration of the official end of slavery in the United States. A celebration of freedom, the first Juneteenth celebration began on June 19 in 1865, in Texas, when the news of the Emancipation Proclamation reached Texas — a full two-and-a-half years after the Emancipation Proclamation was issued on paper.

Chairman Marsha Graham-Ali says that here in Wilmington, the Juneteenth committee runs a number of events throughout the year: "In addition to the annual Juneteenth Festival, we also hold a Black History Month quiz bowl in January in conjunction with UNCW's Upperman Center, a popular swing dance contest, a Gospel Fest, and a Miss Juneteenth pageant whose recipients represent Juneteenth at the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. parade and the Azalea Festival Parade. We also host spoken word events featuring spoken-word poets Trina Thoughtz and Rhonda Sekhmet Ra."

Juneteenth used their WIN grant to increase awareness of the yearly festival with additional advertising and outreach campaigns. Graham-Ali points out that Juneteenth's focus is to "bring all of the Wilmington community together to celebrate African-American history. We want to reach the widest audience possible, and WIN has helped us do that."

Cape Fear Literacy Council (2018)

Yasmin Tomkinson, Executive Director

The Cape Fear Literacy Council provides free, confidential, personalized education so that "adults can transform their lives and contribute to a stronger community." CFLC helps adults with both adult literacy and English as a second language, and offers both group classes and one-on-one instruction. "Most of our students can read or speak some English, but they need help with specific skills," says executive director Yasmin Tomkinson. A small army of nearly 200 volunteer instructors means the instructor knows each student and also makes it possible to adjust instruction for each learner.

Tomkinson says that the grant from WIN has "provided us with funds for COWS, or Computers on Wheels. It's a program that allows us to bring computers and computer-based classes to communities and partner agencies throughout Wilmington." Computers and their accessories are expensive, and it's "only with a funding opportunity like this that we are able to bring such a concept to fruition."

"One of the challenges of literacy is that it is always evolving, and digital literacy is a big issue," she says. Lack of computer literacy can quickly isolate and limit highly competent people. Through the COW program, CFLC's instructors will be able to work with clients in the community and help learners with everything from Microsoft Word, Google documents and job applications. Tomkinson says that "When people become more computer-literate, even if they don't have a computer of their own, they can store documents in the cloud, which they can then access through computers at places like public libraries." That's important, because many things, like job and rental applications, are now done online.

Many of Cape Fear Literacy Council's partner agencies, like Good Shepherd House, StepUp Wilmington and NC Work Force Center, were noticing that their clients were not comfortable with computers. "This is a dream come true for us," says Tomkinson.

For more information about joining WIN, contact membership chair Carol Kennedy at win4nhc@gmail.com

Author and creative writing instructor Virginia Holman lives and writes in Carolina Beach.

Between the Covers

You can go home again. Ask Gwenyfar Rohler, who has transformed her childhood home into a literary North Carolina-themed bed-and-breakfast

By Gwenyfar Rohler · Photographs by Rick Ricozzi

A GARDEN IS A FRIEND
YOU CAN VISIT ANYTIME
FLOWERS OF TOMORROW
ARE THE SEEDS OF TODAY
A ROSE BY ANY OTHER NAME
WOULD SMELL AS SWEET

"My mother won the battle about the dining room paint color from beyond the grave. It's true. She had been dead for nine years and she still won." When I say that to people, they tend to give me a patronizing look. But I am here to tell you that the mother/daughter power struggle doesn't end at the grave. The dining room was my mother's place to show off. Holidays and dinner parties: This was her grand stage, and she dressed it with an Empire mahogany dining set that could pull out to seat 18, china, crystal and Oriental rugs. It was the last interior room I had to finish before we opened my childhood home to the public as Between the Covers, a N.C. literary bed-and-breakfast.

I had spent three years ruminating on paint colors for the dining room to try to save it from this Spanish bordello look that my mother affected. When I was little, it was a mauve/puce color that my father finally rebelled against in the early 2000s: "Diana, I cannot eat another Thanksgiving dinner in a room that looks like Pepto-Bismol!" he said. So my mother had it painted a deep wine color. I hated it. But I put off repainting it because I was intimidated to paint all the wedding-cake molding. On the morning that Elise Seifert, my steady right hand in the renovation and decoration process, and I were putting paint and wallpaper samples on the wall, the air conditioner died downstairs. The estimate came back at close to $8,000 — money I didn't have and would have to find somewhere. All the budget for the dining room and the mental energy for it evaporated into the air-conditioner bill. Fine. I'll repaint it the same color. Everyone else seems to like it anyway. You win, Mommy.

"Scarlett O'Hara and Tara are like child's play compared to how I feel about this house," I frequently tell people. We met on a spring day in 1987, and at once I knew three things: It was haunted, it had a secret passage, and it was the most magical place I had even set foot inside in real life. It was my home and it was waiting for me. The overgrown garden was straight out

of *Sleeping Beauty* or the *Secret Garden*, and the big rambling brick house with crescent-moon shutters and quarter-pie windows was obviously the setting of every Victorian story I had ever encountered. Although at 7 I had no idea that 25 years later I would walk into the planning office and apply for a bed-and-breakfast permit in order to keep my house, I already instinctively knew that we were linked for life and I would go to extraordinary lengths to protect that bond.

My parents saw the house differently, of course. They saw a brick house that would survive a hurricane. It was located six blocks from the house we were moving out of, which my paternal grandparents would shortly occupy until the end of both their natural lives. It offered a big fenced-in yard for their small child and dog to run around together in safety. It boasted a dining room grand enough to accommodate my mother's dining set. But most important: The house had enough blank walls to build bookshelves for the family library my father devoted his life to curating.

My father grew up in a house with one book in it: the Bible. He had a paper route and one of his customers, a local university professor, had a home library that fascinated my dad. The man lent him a copy of Thomas Wolfe's *Look Homeward, Angel*. The gesture changed Daddy's life. He decided that one day he, too, would have a home library. It became one of his driving passions. Thankfully, he married a woman who shared his love of learning, language and books. So when he would come home from Mr. Daughtry's bookstore downtown, with his arms loaded and his eyes barely peeking over the top of the stack, Mommy just smiled.

I didn't know it at the time, but it had become apparent that my grandparents could no longer live alone in Florida, 11 hours from their closest relative. Once my parents decided to move them to Wilmington, we began house-hunting for the solution to this new phase of family life. Finding bookshelf space was the unexpected challenge. I remember real estate agents pointing to the wall of a garage as the solution to the bookshelf question.

"You really don't understand," Mommy shook her head. "We are not talking about two kit shelves from K-Mart. Think floor-to-ceiling built-ins." In the car she would mutter about humidity and mold and who would treat books like that? Not to mention that most certainly there was not enough room.

When we met, my house already had glass-fronted, built-in bookcases in the living room — and the family was even leaving them filled with books that they were not taking with them! "Lloyd, we are not getting a mortgage based upon a couple hundred dollars' worth of books you can probably buy from Mr. Daughtry," my mother warned. But to my father it was a sign. The house came with books! This was it! Thus, I grew up with an encyclopedia set discovered in the house that was printed at the end of the 19th century: before the atomic age, before World Wars I and II, and the mythology section included 30 pages of illustrated stories.

We became the second family to live in the house. It was built by the Hoopers, and since we have owned it for more than 30 years, if we ever pursued a plaque from the Historic Wilmington Foundation, it would be designated The Hooper-Rohler House. The matriarch of the family, Mrs. Hooper, lived out the end of her days in her bedroom at the top of the stairs with servants and nurses to care for her. The rest of the house was ignored, painted a horrid institutional green

and slowly decayed around her. Historic houses require constant daily care. It can feel like you hemorrhage money because everything has to be custom made for the house: None of the windows are truly square, none of the doors are standard or pre-hung, when plumbing breaks it has to be rebuilt in ways that boggle the mind. As a child I absorbed these lessons by osmosis. As an adult I have lived them. Every day for the last five years I have spent covered in paint and plaster.

My parents were not handy by any stretch of the imagination. To my father, a screwdriver was a breakfast drink, not something found in a toolbox. So the image you might have of the scrappy young couple with ideas and sweat equity restoring an old house doesn't really fit them. How they took on the 17-year renovation project of the house amazes me still.

But they did.

They closed on the purchase of the house in the height of the summer heat, walked out of the lawyer's office, and drove to Cannon Heating and Air, where they signed a contract to put air conditioning in the house for the first time. There is a very special smell to un-air-conditioned old houses in the South in the summer. It smells like stepping back in time. The rare whiffs I get take me immediately to that first summer before we moved in when we visited every day and watched the plaster guy re-sculpt the walls. I dubbed him Michelangelo when I saw him working on the scaffolding to reach the 14-foot ceilings downstairs. He chuckled and told me his real name, which I don't remember.

When I hit on the idea of the B&B as a way to keep the house, I knew it would have to be themed around books and writers. In addition to our family library, we were selected by Mr. Daughtry to carry on his bookstore on Front Street when he retired. (So fate intervened, and I am now the managing partner of Old Books on Front Street! Come by and see me sometime.) The more I thought about it, the more apparent it became to me that I wanted to celebrate North Carolina writers. Not that Jane Austen and Harry Potter wouldn't have more commercial value. But my heart, the house's heart, and our family life was centered around the written word, and North Carolina life and culture. The dining room mantelpiece holds the books my father wrote. My grandmother had a sixth-grade education and learned English when she started grade school. The great marvel of her life was that her son got a Ph.D. and wrote books. The Hoopers were kin to William Hooper, one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence, and Johnson Jones Hooper, a Southern humorist from the early 19th century. But which North Carolina writers to choose? And how?

I knew from the very beginning that Maya Angelou — who lived in Winston-Salem and taught at Wake Forest for more than 30 years — was one of the writers I wanted to honor. At the top of the stairs is an elegant room with French doors. Originally it was probably a sleeping porch that got enclosed, maybe sometime in the 1940s or '50s. When I was little, it was my mother's office and occasional guest room. But now it is painted yellow in honor of Dr. Angelou's "little yellow house that *Caged Bird* bought" in Winston-Salem. The west-facing windows catch the late afternoon sun and make the walls glow. It is a cozy little haven for writing that calls to me on cool winter afternoons.

The day that Elsie and I put the world map mural on the ceiling of the Tom Robbins Room is one that I will never forget. It began with me looking at her and asking if she was in until we were finished. Because wallpaper shrinks when it dries, we had to do the whole thing in one day. She grinned and agreed. "How many books are on the walls?" is the question I get asked most often by friends and guests. There are six in the two bottom layers and the top layer are both Tom Robbins novels: *Another Road Side Attraction* and *Still Life*

PROLOGUE
Another Roadside Attraction
Even Cowgirls Get the Blues
Still Life With Woodpecker
Smoking Perfume
Skinny Legs and All

LOVE

JA

with Woodpecker. It took six weeks to decoupage all four walls while I listened to British mystery books on tape. This was my bedroom growing up. When we first moved into the house, we all lived in this room because it was the only one that had the plaster repaired, the walls painted and the floor finished. My parents slept on a fold-out sofa and I was on a roll-away cot for six months until they moved into the room that joins via the bathroom. Now the Zelda Fitzgerald Lounge, it was my parents' bedroom until I was about 11, when they finally moved into the master bedroom (which I plan to open as the Ender's Game Room next year. But I need six months off from sanding plaster before I tackle that room.)

I eventually claimed the adjoining room as an office space in high school (teenagers are very interested in expanding their domain.) Somehow this was the only room to escape the institutional green treatment and still has its original wallpaper from the 1940s — which was the time period Zelda lived in Asheville. I took the radiator cover to Steven's Hardware on Dawson and got them to match the paint color exactly for repainting the trim.

Dr. Hooper had his office in the house, and that is the first room my father lined with floor-to-ceiling bookshelves. We were still sleeping in one room and eating dinner out of cardboard boxes, but Daddy got his bookshelves. During his lifetime it was the classic university professor's home office: two desks, overflowing file cabinets, books, stacks of papers to grade, filing cards for his current research project, articles to review . . . in short it was cozy, academic chaos. After he passed away in 2014 and I began repairing the plaster (again) and painting the walls and shelves, the rugs came up and the desks went to other rooms because local piano virtuoso James Jarvis informed me that the grand piano of my dreams was going to be delivered to the house. "It is the same vintage as the house," James explained. "It's perfect, it is where it belongs. (the piano) will be happy here."

"You've built a temple to the written word," one friend observed.

"No," I shook my head thinking about the library in the house and the bookstore — the legacy from my parents. "It has built me."

Between the Covers, A North Carolina Writers B & B, 1817 Market Street, Wilmington. (910)398-7753. For more information: betweenthecoversbandbnc.com. Visit Gwenyfar at her shop, Old Books on Front Street, 249 N. Front St., Wilmington.

Gwenyfar Rohler spends her days managing her family's bookstore on Front Street.

ALMANAC

January

By Ash Alder

January is a masterpiece unfurling.

In the garden, everything feels like a tiny miracle. Each ice crystal. Each smiling pansy. Each tender bud on the heirloom camellia.

Notice how the curling bark of the river birch looks like downy feathers.

Even the sunlight looks softer than you've ever seen it.

Folk singer Cat Stevens made popular the Christian hymn that says as much:

Morning has broken, like the first morning
Blackbird has spoken, like the first bird
Praise for the singing, praise for the morning
Praise for them springing fresh from the world . . .

In January, the sweetness of infinite possibility appears in many forms, and in every direction.

You clean the birdbath, add fresh water, return to the kitchen for the whistling kettle. As your sachet of tea pirouettes in hot water, the aroma of citrus, clove and cinnamon permeates the air, and there is movement in the periphery. Flashes of red. Through the window, you watch a pair of cardinals splash round in the clean water, preening each feather — each tiny miracle.

January is a threshold to wonders yet unknown. You enter bright-eyed, as if your very breath brings to life each miracle. As if you can taste the sweetness of the first morning with every cell.

Royal Mayhem

What's a Twelfth Night Feast without the possibility of being crowned king or queen for the evening? In ancient Roman times, a single bean was baked into a fruit-laden pastry, the recipient of which appointed "Lord of Misrule" for the night. Also called "King of the Bean," whoever received the loaded slice of cake was decked in full regalia. And don't forget to celebrate the "Queen of the Pea."

Twelfth Night falls on January 5, Eve of Epiphany and the new moon, a good time to set intentions (and drink wassail).

What magic are you calling in this new year? Crown yourself King or Queen for the night, fill your chalice, and dream bigger.

Sweet Herbal Magic

While the soil is cool, plant spring bulbs and fruit trees, harvest edible weeds and winter greens, and when the work is done, create sacred space to enjoy this winter season . . . and tea.

January is National Hot Tea Month.

Loose leaf is best.

Indulge.

Add honey, lemon, spices, sticks of cinnamon.

Cook with it.

Chai and matcha shortbread cookies. Roasted oolong ice cream. Tea-smoked quail, turkey or duck.

Detoxing? Dandelion root has long been used to help cleanse the liver and gallbladder.

Sore throat? Try peppermint, echinacea, ginger root or slippery elm.

And if you're dreaming of summer: sweet rose.

Happy New Year

Although the ancient Roman farmers' almanac dubs Juno the tutelary of the month, conventional wisdom claims that January is named for Janus, two-headed god of beginnings, endings, and everything in between: gates, transitions, passages, and doorways.

Speaking of doors . . .

Know how Denmark celebrates New Year's Eve? Breaking dishes on the doorsteps of those nearest and dearest, a strange yet endearing way of expressing love and best wishes. The bigger the pile of shattered dishes you discover at your front door on January 1, the bigger the fortune you will receive in the coming year.

You might try an alternate gesture of kindness here: a gift from the garden; a letter; sachets of spicy loose-leaf tea.

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Arts Calendar

An Evening with Patti LaBelle

Finding Neverland

Polar Plunge

1/25

2/4-5

2/23

To add a calendar event, please contact calendar@saltmagazinenc.com. Events must be submitted by the first of the month, one month prior to the event.

1/3 - 1/19 Mamma Mia

This jukebox musical by British playwright Catherine Johnson uses the music of ABBA as its empowering score. Tickets: $20-$32. Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut St., Wilmington. Info: (910) 632-2285 or thalianhall.org.

1/9 Jazz at the Cam

6:30 p.m. Celebrate the New Year with the lively beat of La Fiesta Jazz Quartet. Tickets: $12-$20. Cameron Art Museum, 3201 S. 17th St., Wilmington. Info: cameronartmuseum.org/jazz.

1/12 154th Anniversary of the Battle of Fort Fisher

10 a.m. Go back in time to 1865 as infantry re-enactors re-create the Battle of Fort Fisher. Photographer Harry Taylor will be available with his vintage 1860s wet-plate photography studio to take pictures of guests. Fort Fisher State Historic Site, 1610 Fort Fisher Blvd., Kure Beach. For info: (910) 251-7340.

1/12-13 Evita

7:30 p.m. The award-winning musical based on the life story of Evita Peron, a poor girl who went on to become the wife of the president of Argentina. Wilson Center Tickets: $37-$95. Wilson Center, 703 N. Third St., Wilmington. Info: (910) 362-7999 or tickets@capefearstage.com.

1/13 Beethoven 15K and 5K Run

9 a.m. The Wilmington Symphony Orchestra's 6th annual Beethoven 15K and 5K run takes place today at Brunswick Forest. This year also features a Doggy Dash fun run. Tickets: $30-$45. Brunswick Forest, 1007 Evangeline Drive, Leland. For more info: wilmingtonsymphony.org.

1/14 Masters of Illusion — Live!

7:30 p.m. The world's greatest magicians present an evening of illusion, deception, and humor. Tickets: $25-$69. Wilson Center, 703 N. Third St., Wilmington. Info: (910) 362-7999 or cfcc.edu.

1/18 - 20 Stuart Little

7:30 p.m. Thalian Association Community Theatre presents *Stuart Little*, based on the beloved children's book by E.B. White. Tickets: $15. Community Arts Theater, 120 S. Second St., Wilmington. For information: (910) 251-1788 or thalian.org.

1/18 - 20 Wilmington Antiques Show and Sale

10 a.m - 5 p.m. More than 35 antiques dealers from around the region will participate in the Wilmington Antiques Show and Sale, hosted by North Carolina Sorosis. Tickets: $10. Wilson Center, 703 N. Third St., Wilmington. For more info: (910) 791-6128 or ncsorosis.org.

1/19 - 20 Courtyards & Cobblestones

4 p.m. - 8 p.m. Need some wedding planning advice? Courtyards & Cobblestones is a wedding event that showcases styled venues in five downtown locations. Admission includes self-guided venue tour, tastings, and a Sunday brunch. Tickets: $35-$45. For information: courtyardsandcobblestones.com.

1/23 Jenny Scheinman's Kannapolis: A Moving Portrait

7:30 p.m. Musician Jenny Scheinman's blending of music and film creates a vivid image of small-town life. Tickets: $20-$50. Kenan Auditorium, UNCW, 515 Wagoner Drive, Wilmington. For information: (910) 962-3500 or uncw.edu/arts.

1/24 Wish Upon a Chef

6 p.m. - 10 p.m. A gourmet round-up of local chefs who will prepare a variety of dishes that are reviewed by celebrity judges. Proceeds benefit the Make-a-Wish Foundation. Burney Center, UNCW, Price Drive, Wilmington. For more information and tickets: (910) 399-1375 or eastnc.wish.org.

1/25 An Evening with Patti LaBelle

7:30 p.m. Legendary singer Patti LaBelle comes to the Wilson Center stage for an evening of her R & B hits, including "Lady Marmalade." Tickets: $48-$125. Wilson Center, 703 N. Third St., Wilmington. Info: (910) 362-7999 or pattilabelle.com.

1/25 10th Annual Port City Ping Pong Throwdown

6:15 Bring your mad skills to the 10th Annual Port City Ping Pong Throw Down at the Brooklyn Arts Center in downtown Wilmington. Prize money will be awarded to winners. Admission: $5-$10. For more info: (910) 538-2939 or brooklynartsnc.com.

1/26 Wilmington Symphony Orchestra Concert

7:30 p.m. An evening featuring winners of the Young Artists Concerto Competition and a performance of Schubert's *Symphony No. 8, Unfinished*. Tickets: $17-$47. Wilson Center, 703 N. Third St., Wilmington. Info: (910) 362-7999 or wilmingtonsymphony.org.

1/27 Chamber Music Wilmington Concert

7:30 p.m. Beckwith Recital Hall is the setting for the Aizuri Quartet, musicians in residence at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, in a program that includes works by Shaw, Mendelssohn and Webern. Tickets: $30. Beckwith Recital Hall, UNCW, 5270 Randall Drive, Wilmington. For more info: (910) 962-3500 or chambermusicwilmington.org.

FEBRUARY

2/1- 2 39th Annual North Carolina Jazz Festival

7:30 p.m. This year's performers include Grenoldo Frazier, Brazilian vocalist Maucha Adnet and her husband, Duduka da Fonseca. Each night will feature at least six sets with different musicians. Tickets: $15-$225. Hotel Ballast, 301 N. Water St., Wilmington. For information: ncjazzfestival.org.

2/4-5 Finding Neverland

7:30 p.m. Diane Paulus directs *Finding Neverland*, the true story behind the character of Peter Pan. Part of the Wilson Center's PNC Broadway series. Tickets: $37-$95. Wilson Center, 703 N. Third St., Wilmington. For info: (910) 362-7999 or tickets@capefearstage.com.

2/7 Jazz at the Cam

6:30 pm The Cape Fear Jazz Society and the Cameron Art Museum present the Jon Hill Quartet. Tickets: $12-$20. Cameron Art Museum, 3201 S. 17th St., Wilmington. Info: cameronartmuseum.org/jazz.

2/7 -10 8th Annual East Coast Shag Classic

This weekend for all things Shag will feature lessons, dance performances, open dancing, and live music from bands including Gary Louder & Smokin' Hot and The Entertainers. Hotel packages available. Holiday Inn Resort, 1706 N. Lumina Ave., Wrightsville Beach. For more info: (910) 256-2231 or hopeabounds.org.

2/9 Valentine's Day Run

8 a.m. and 9 a.m. Wrightsville Beach Parks & Recreation hosts a Valentine's Day run, with 5K, 10K, and 15K races. 5K and 15K begin at 8 a.m.; 10K starts at 9 a.m. Admission: $30-$60. Wrightsville Beach Park, 3 Bob Sawyer Drive, Wrightsville Beach. More info: (910) 256-7925 or its-go-time-com/wb-valentine-run.

2/9-10 Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat

3 p.m. (Sunday matinee); 7:30 p.m. Thalian Association Community Theatre will perform Andrew Lloyd Weber's hit musical *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*. Tickets: $32. Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut St., Wilmington. Info: (910) 632-2285 or thalian.org.

2/14 Ririe Woodbury Dance Company

7:30 p.m. This celebrated Utah-based dance company will perform three works at the Wilson Center. Tickets: $22-$25. Wilson Center, 703 N. Third St., Wilmington. Info: (910) 372-7999 or tickets@capefearstage.com.

2/19 -20 Rock of Ages

7:30 p.m. The PNC Broadway series at Wilson Center continues with *Rock of Ages*, a jukebox musical that features popular hits of the '80s. Tickets: $37-$95. Wilson Center, 703 N. Third St., Wilmington. Info: (910) 362-7999 or tickets@capefearstage.com.

2/21 - 24 Marian — The True Tale of Robin Hood

2 p.m. (Sunday matinee); 8 p.m. A gender-bending comedy takes a walk through Sherwood Forest. Tickets: $12-$15. Cultural Arts Building, UNCW, 5270 Randall Drive, Wilmington. For more info: (910) 962-3500 or uncw.edu/theatre.

2/23 Dance Theatre of Harlem

7:30 p.m. The Dance Theatre of Harlem celebrates its 50th anniversary this year with a performance at Kenan Auditorium. Tickets: $15-$100. Kenan Auditorium, UNCW, 515 Wagoner Drive, Wilmington. For information: (910) 962-3500 or uncw.edu/arts.

2/23 Polar Plunge

11 a.m - 4 p.m. Hearty souls brave a dip in the ocean at the annual Polar Plunge at the Kure Beach Boardwalk. Events include live music, DJ, silent auction and a costume contest. Proceeds benefit New Hanover County Special Olympics. Admission:$30-$55. Free for spectators. Kure Beach Boardwalk, 100 Atlantic Avenue, Kure Beach. For more info: (910) 341-7253 or specialolympicsnhc.com.

2/23 Tidewater Camellia Club Spring Show and Sale

10 am. - 5 p.m. This annual flower show features exhibitors from all over the Southeast. There will be a camellia contest with judges from the American Camellia Society. Admission: Free. New Hanover County Arboretum, 6206 Oleander Drive, Wilmington. For more info: tidewatercamelliaclub.org.

2/27 Beijing Dance Theatre's Hamlet

7:30 p.m. The Beijing Dance Theater's *Hamlet* interprets Shakespeare's melancholy character through interpretive dance. Wilson Center, 703 N. Third St., Wilmington. Info: (910) 362-7999 or cfcc.edu/capefearstage/hamlet.

2/28 Always . . . Patsy Cline

3 p.m. (Sunday matinee); 7:30 p.m. Opera House Theatre Company presents this life of country music legend Patsy Cline, who died in a plane crash at age 30. Musical numbers include her hits "Walkin' After Midnight", "Crazy" and "Always". Tickets: $32. Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut Street, Wilmington. For more info: (910) 632-2285 or operahouse.squarespace.com.

WEEKLY HAPPENINGS

Monday

Wrightsville Farmers Market

8 a.m. – 1 p.m. Curbside beach market offering a variety of fresh, locally grown produce, baked goods, plants and unique arts and crafts. Seawater Lane, Wrightsville Beach. Info: (910) 256-7925 or www.townofwrightsvillebeach.com.

Tuesday

Wine Tasting

6 p.m. – 8 p.m. Free wine tasting hosted by a wine professional plus small plate specials all night. Admission: Free. The Fortunate Glass, 29 S. Front St., Wilmington. Info: (910) 399-4292 or www.fotunateglass.com.

Cape Fear Blues Jam

8 p.m. A night of live music performed by the area's best Blues musicians. Bring your instrument and join in the fun. Admission: Free. The Rusty Nail, 1310 S. Fifth Ave., Wilmington. Info: (910) 251-1888 or www.capefearblues.org.

Wednesday

Free Wine Tasting at Sweet n Savory Cafe

5 p.m. – 8 p.m. Sample delicious wines for free. Pair them with a meal, dessert, or appetizer and learn more about the wines of the world. Live music starts at 7. Admission: Free. Sweet n Savory Cafe, 1611 Pavilion Place, Wilmington. Info: (910) 256-0115 or www.swetnsavorycafe.com.

Weekly Exhibition Tours

1:30 p.m. – 2:00 p.m. A weekly tour of the iconic Cameron Arts Museum, featuring presentations about the various exhibits and the selection and installation process. Cameron Arts Museum, 3201 S. Seventeenth S., Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.cameronartsmuseum.org.

Ogden Farmers Market

8 a.m. – 1 p.m. Local farmers, producers and artisans sell fresh fruits, veggies, plants, eggs, cheese, meat, honey, baked goods, wine, bath products and more. Ogden Park, 615 Ogden Park Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 538-6223 or www.wilmingtonandbeach-

es.com/events-calendar/ogden-farmers-market.

Poplar Grove Farmers Market

8 a.m. – 1 p.m. Open-air market held on the front lawn of historic Poplar Grove Plantation offering fresh produce, plants, herbs, baked goods and handmade artisan crafts. Poplar Grove Plantation, 10200 US Highway 17 North, Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.poplargrove.org/farmers-market.

Thursday

Wrightsville Beach Brewery Farmers Market

2 p.m. – 6 p.m. Come support local farmers and artisans every Thursday afternoon in the beer garden at the Wrightsville Beach Brewery. Shop for eggs, veggies, meat, honey, and handmade crafts while enjoying one of the Brewery's tasty beers. Stay for live music afterwards. Admission: Free. Wrightsville Beach Brewery, 6201 Oleander Dr., Wilmington. Info: (910) 256-4938 or www.wbbeer.com.

Yoga at the CAM

12–1 p.m. Join in a soothing retreat sure to charge you up while you relax in a beautiful, comfortable setting. Sessions are ongoing and are open to both beginners and experienced participants. Admission: $5–8. Cameron Art Museum, 3201 S. Seventeenth St., Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.cameronartmuseum.org.

Friday and Saturday

Cape Fear Museum Little Explorers

10 a.m. Meet your friends in Museum Park for fun, hands-on activities! Enjoy interactive circle time, conduct exciting experiments, and play games related to a weekly theme. Perfect for children ages 3 to 6 and their adult helpers. Admission: Free. Cape Fear Museum, 814 Market St., Wilmington. Info: (910) 798-4370 or www.capefearmuseum.com.

Blackwater Adventure Tours

Join in an educational guided boat tour from downtown Wilmington to River Bluffs, exploring the mysterious beauty of the Northeast Cape Fear River. See website for schedule. River Bluffs, 1100 Chair Road, Castle Hayne. Info: (910) 623-5015 or www.riverbluffsliving.com.

Saturday

Carolina Beach Farmers Market

8 a.m. – 1 p.m. Outdoor "island-style" market featuring live music and local growers, producers and artisans selling fresh local produce, wines meats, baked goods, herbal products and handmade crafts. Carolina Beach Lake Park, Highway 421 and Atlanta Avenue, Carolina Beach. Info: (910) 458-2977 or www.carolinabeachfarmersmarket.com.

Wilmington Farmers Market at Tidal Creek

8 a.m. to 1 p.m. Weekly gathering of vetted vendors with fresh produce straight from the farm. Sign up for the weekly newsletter for advanced news of the coming weekend's harvest. 5329 Oleander Drive, Wilmington. For info: thewilmingtonfarmersmarket.com.

Riverfront Farmers Market

8 a.m. – 1 p.m. Curbside market featuring local farmers, producers, artisans, crafters and live music along the banks of the Cape Fear River. Riverfront Park, North Water St., Wilmington. Info: (910) 538-6223 or www.wilmingtondowntown.com/events/farmers-market.

Taste of Downtown Wilmington

2:15 p.m., 2:45 p.m., and 3:15 p.m. A weekly gourmet food tour by Taste Carolina, featuring some of downtown Wilmington's best restaurants. Each time slot showcases different food. See website for details. Admission: $55–75. Riverwalk at Market Street, Wilmington. Info: (919) 237-2254 or www.tastecarolina.net/wilmington/.

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Port City People

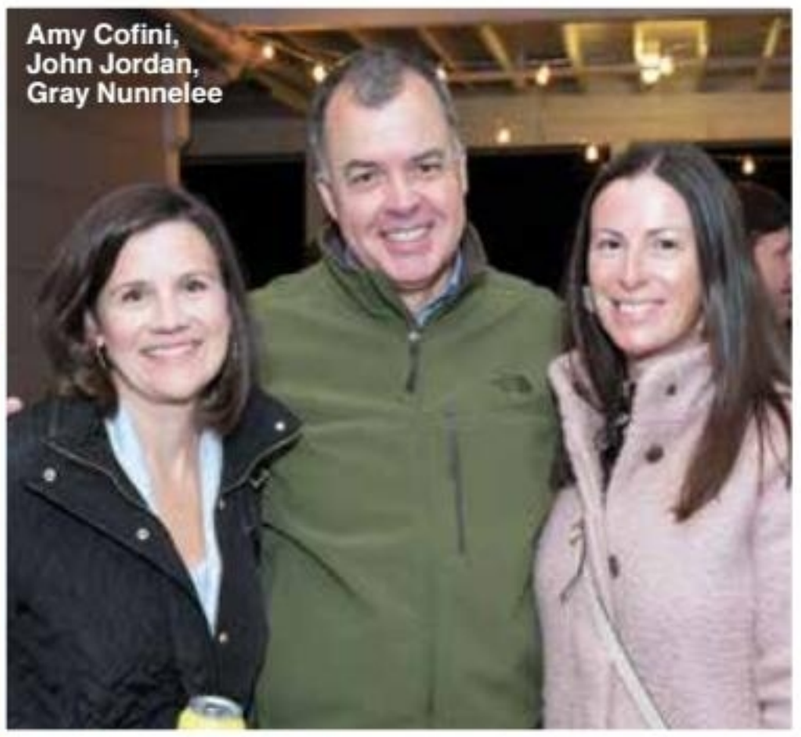
5th Annual Flavor of North Carolina

Benefit for the Good Shepherd Center
Carolina Yacht Club - Wrightsville Beach
Saturday, November 17, 2018

Photographs by Bill Ritenour

Liz Carbone, Stacy Geist, Jane Birnbach

Lisa Weeks, Jay Cole


Amy Cofini, John Jordan, Gray Nunnelee

Lillian & Michael Teer

Kelly Brown, Elyssa Miller

Angus & Betsy McDonald, Barbara & Martin Barbee

Ginger Reynolds, Claire Parker, Lauren Stovall, Rob Reynolds, Emmet Stovall

Chris & Melissa George

Tanner & T Dodson

Ann Longley, Dink Elebash, Dean Gornto

Tee Nunnelee, Matthew & Helen Walsh

Linda Brown, Sherri Robinson

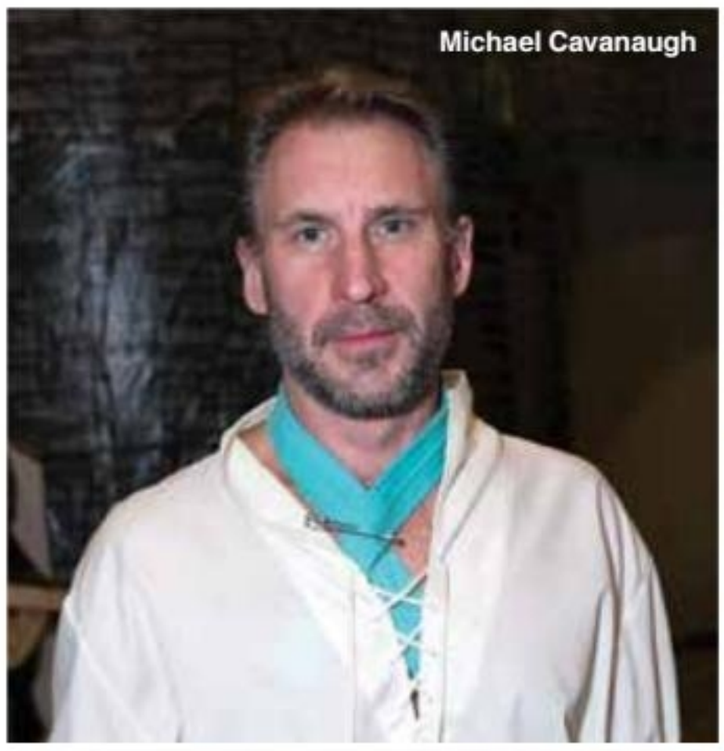
Port City People

Winter is Coming

Cape Fear Literacy Council's
33rd Annual Gala

Saturday, November, 17, 2018

Photographs by Bill Ritenour


Michael Cavanaugh

Rad & Dawn Bunting, Marie MacDonald, Chris Chaffin

Maggi Apel, Craig Snow, Gina Andrews, Diane Snow

Marilynn & Guy Fiacco

Rob Morgan, Ashley Ingold, Ariel Hines

Samantha Ledford, Sydney Pope

Paula Smallwood, Andrew Hall

Dr. Ashly & Kristine Smith, Lindsay Wright, Ray Charfavros

JC Lyle, Jared Kerr

Darien Hewett, Meghan Potter, Sarah Harris

Hunter Ingram, Stacy & Jeff Hidek

Savannah Tindol, Alexandra Lysik, Kelly Stewart

Port City People

Culinary Institute Scholarship Dinner

Presentation of A Chaine Foundation Scholarship to the CFCC Culinary Institute

Wednesday, November 28, 2018

Photographs by Bill Ritenour

Back Row: Garret Wilson, Isaac Jacobs, Pete Morimer, Preston Jolly

Front Row: Christian Rociappi, Chef Gwen Guilliksen (CFCCCI), Mike Cosenza, Peyton Batchelor

Beth Guertin, Broc Bilby, Diane Withrow, John Willse

Jim Wallace, Colleen Britton, Renee & Scott Rudisill

James Nelson, Chef Gwen Guilliksen

Sokun Slama, Beth Guertin

Chef Gwen Guilliksen, James Nelson, Garret Wilson, Lauren Wolf

Allyson & Tony Hirsh

Rose Matthews, Michelle & John Crosbie

Addison Phipps, Keenan Bushinski, Diane Winthrow

Amber & Jud Watkins, Erica Nelson

Sokun & Guillaume Slama

Port City People

ILM Lampoon's 12 Tastes of Christmas

A benefit to raise funds for
DREAMS of Wilmington

Thursday, December 13, 2018

Photographs by Bill Ritenour

Hannah Wojteczko, Aaron Belcher

Sana Lockler, Thomas Bailey, Michael Chihill

Allison & Doug Evans

Michael & Sharon Hamby

Ben & Heather Bullock

Kara & Jason Eudy

Lisa & Thomas Brite

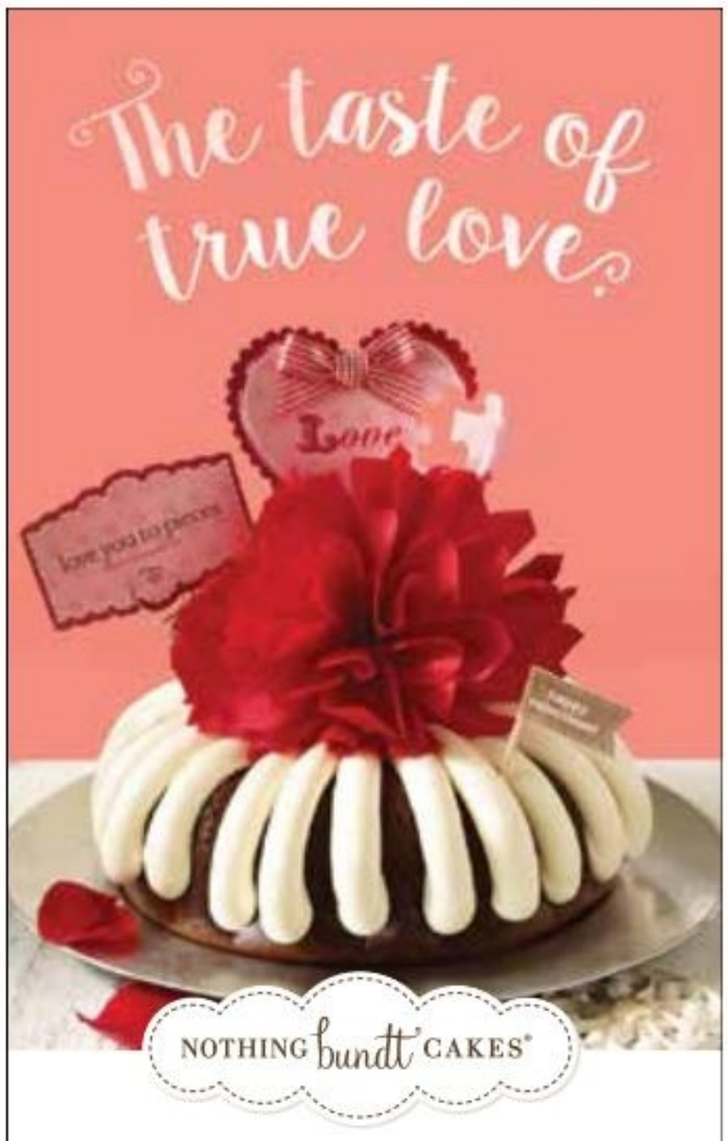
Michel Gnagy, Scott Crosby

Vanessa & Frank Heacox

Jenn & Jared Stanton

Haley Kenyon, Gillian Novello

Holly Cole Brown & Wesley Brown



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Seafood, Blues & Jazz Festival
April 13-14, 2019

34TH
CAROLINA BEACH MUSIC FESTIVAL
JUNE 1st, 2019 ON PLEASURE ISLAND
June 1, 2019

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F·E·S·T·I·V·A·L
2·0·1·9
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August 24, 2019

2019 BEACH BACON & BEER Festival
OCTOBER 12th
CAROLINA BEACH LAKE
October 12, 2019

CASINO NIGHT
November 2, 2019

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The Happiness Project

With a little effort, the world's a better place in 2019

By Astrid Stellanova

Buh-bye, 2018! It's all in the rearview mirror now, right? Not quite, Star Children. We tripped right on out of trippy December, barreling straight for the yellow brick road of the New Year, but first a check-in question for the New Age: Were you really good for goodness sake or was it to look good in your selfies?

Think about it. In the cosmic sense, all those clicks, likes and dislikes, will be relegated to the basement of history faster than a smiley face. No matter, there are 365 days to get things right or just a little righter. Aim to do something to make this ole world twirl with happiness. — Ad Astra, Astrid

Capricorn (December 22–January 19)
It may have burned your biscuits that you didn't get something promised to you, and you can blame it on that ole buzzkill buzzard Saturn, who's been making you toe the line since last year. But take heart, little Goat, because the stars sure do point to a better twist in the tale. Hang onto your shorts, Love Bug. Things are resolving faster than you can say stink on a stick.

Aquarius (January 20–February 18)
New year, new you — which is saying something for Aquarians. You have a new sense of resolve, and Birthday Guys and Gals, I'm picking up what you're laying down. Don't let anybody trap you in just old ways of thinking or acting. You know what you want, you have resolved to pursue change, and don't let your critics get in your head and change your mind. If there's a bigger birthday wish you're dreaming of than that one, just pucker up and blow!

Pisces (February 19–March 20)
Well, Honey Bun, you've been up since the crack of noon saying you have a whole new brand to build. Who are you kidding? You are not a Kardashian. Honey, you are you — the you that everybody knows and loves doesn't have to follow trends or trolls to roll with fabulousness.

Aries (March 21–April 19)
Oh, yeah. You want everybody but you to tend to their own knitting, but just look at what a tangled-up skein of yarn you have made. Now get it straightened out and don't Tom Sawyer one of your many friends into fixing your mess. Word is you have a nice surprise soon after if you take care of business.

Taurus (April 20–May 20)
Stranger danger, Sugar, but only from burnout. It's too people-y out there to venture forth. Stay in a little more, read a book, snuggle on the sofa and keep your own counsel. You have been struttin' your stuff day and night; it wouldn't hurt one iota to spend a night or two being a couch potato with a bag of Cheetos.

Gemini (May 21–June 20)
Make sure your brain is as sharp as your tongue this month, when you get to feeling a little challenged by those near and dear. It is possible you are overreacting, Honey, or just plain acting for the love of drama. It is a good month for holding back a tee-ninesy bit.

Cancer (June 21–July 22)
You had a hissy fit with a tail on it, and what did it get you? You got to eat a slice of hypocrite pie, because the very thing you got so riled up about is something you have done to yourself. While all this played out, you didn't notice something worth noting. Open your eyeballs.

Leo (July 23–August 22)
You know horse hockey when you step in it. And you stepped in it. But here we are with a new year, new view and an open path around all the traps you fell into last year. Step high, keep your eyes wide open and watch the horizon. Tall, dark and handsome (or be-yoo-tiful) is heading your way.

Virgo (August 23–September 22)
You felt out of whack. You were stressed. And it was a lot of piddlin' things keeping you off your game. The things that kept you upside down were not of your own making. Clouds are clearing. Pretend you are already feeling better, Sweet Thing.

Libra (September 23–October 22)
Skedaddle and make sure you leave before you get invited out the door. You were innocent but ignored the signs that a sometimes friend wasn't so friendly. They take some warming up to, and the heater went cold, so find new friends and move along as if it never even happened.

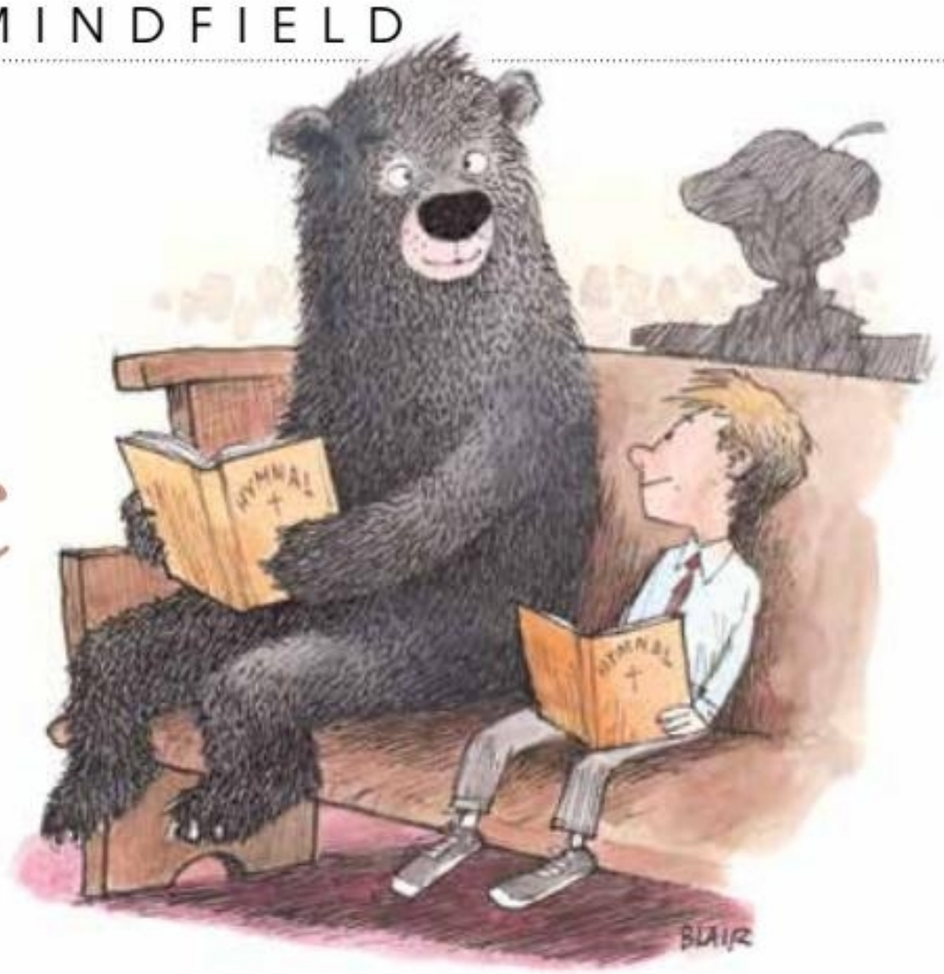
Scorpio (October 23–November 21)
You have big plans but your own stomping grounds aren't so bad. Dollywood is fun, but right under your nose there are all kinds of possibilities, Sugar Foot. Many are fond of your wit and wisdom. Don't let the familiar turn you away or off.

Sagittarius (November 22–December 21)
This year could be a wing dinger, Sugar. It happens to be one of your better ones. You've been busy taking up with all kinds of unusual occupations and friends, and that is a good thing. You will broaden your view, and have a whatchamadoodle of a time doing it.

For years, Astrid Stellanova owned and operated Curl Up and Dye Beauty Salon in the boondocks of North Carolina until arthritic fingers and her popular astrological readings provoked a new career path.

Give Me That Old-Time Music

The comfort of familiar hymns



By Clyde Edgerton

After New Year's Eve is a good time to think over the past year — or maybe the past 75, especially if something pops up that gives birth to memories that emerge from behind stacks of present-day urgencies and conflicts.

I've recently been looking through the hymn book I grew up with in a Southern Baptist church — the *Broadman Hymnal*: a staple for many denominations back in the day. My looking through this book gave fresh birth to old memories.

Most people, as children, sang songs. For me, it was religious songs. And many children, because they sing songs written by adults, mess up the meanings of words.

In Sunday School at my church long ago, we children sang "Jesus Wants Me for a Sunbeam." I always heard and thus sang "Jesus wants me for a sun*bean*." In my mind's eye, a sunbean was shaped like a butter bean (translation: lima bean) and had a silvery, bright sheen. I wasn't sure why Jesus wanted me to be one. Who was Jesus anyway? I'd not quite figured that out by age 4.

In my church, after Sunday School on a Sunday morning, we kids went into the big people's church and sat still or squirmed for an hour or so — usually with parents, a parent, or someone else's parents — while things happened around us, and in the choir, and up in the pulpit. We didn't get the big picture until about the age 12, when we finally clearly understood the nature of the universe and our place in it.

Early on, well before the age of 12, all the hymns seemed benevolent and kind and good, in spite of my recognizing in those songs images of war — as well as of peace — of fear and hope, of the wild and the tame, the obedient and disobedient. But because of my place in my community and church, because of my beliefs, I felt very safe, unthreatened.

Approaching the teenage years, sitting or standing in the big church, we still didn't always comprehend clearly. There's that famous example: the hymn "Gladly the Cross I'd Bear." As: "Gladly, the Cross-Eyed Bear."

A song like "Standing on the Promises" was hard for me to grasp. I was unable to sustain a meaning for a participial phrase, "standing on," along with the abstract noun "promises," in the same sentence. I visualized "promises" as bridge trusses made of human arms. People in a far-off country stood on them. Therefore, the meaning of the song, though I'd sing the printed words, was mangled.

"When the Roll is Called Up Yonder" brought visions of a bread roll with ears and legs — ambling doglike across a green meadow, having been called: "Come, Fluffy. Come, girl." I was there watching because the hymn said, "When the roll is called up yonder I'll be there."

Then, yo, and verily, verily, we became teenagers.

Teenage friends were allowed to sit together, sometimes all the way back on the back row. We'd play "Between the Sheets." Teenager A would open the hymnbook to a random page and whisper the hymn title to Teenager B. B would say: "Between the Sheets."

I'm sitting here with the *Broadman Hymnal* now, as I write. I'm about to open to some random pages.

"Dare to Be Brave, Dare to Be True" . . . "Onward, Christian Soldiers" . . . "Blow Ye the Trumpet, Blow" . . . "I Surrender All" . . . You get the idea (and probably did before the examples).

Now, as an adult, I enjoy singing the old hymns in church. I haven't yet been able to enjoy contemporary religious music. I like what I heard as a child. Probably not so much because I did or didn't understand meanings, but because back then I felt at peace. I felt very safe; meanings about life and the universe were absolutely true. Though my outlook has changed, it's comforting to sing the old hymns, to reconnect with those feelings of security and peace.

Clyde Edgerton is the author of 10 novels, a memoir and most recently, Papadaddy's Book for New Fathers. *He is the Thomas S. Keenan III Distinguished Professor of Creative Writing at UNCW.*

ILLUSTRATION BY HARRY BLAIR

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